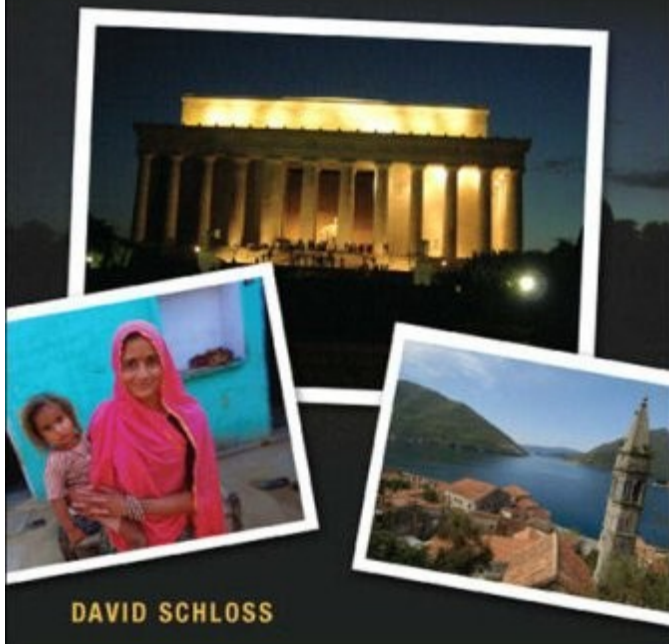


the blue pixel guide to

*With photographs and
practical advice from the
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Travel Photography

Perfect Photos Every Time



DAVID SCHLOSS

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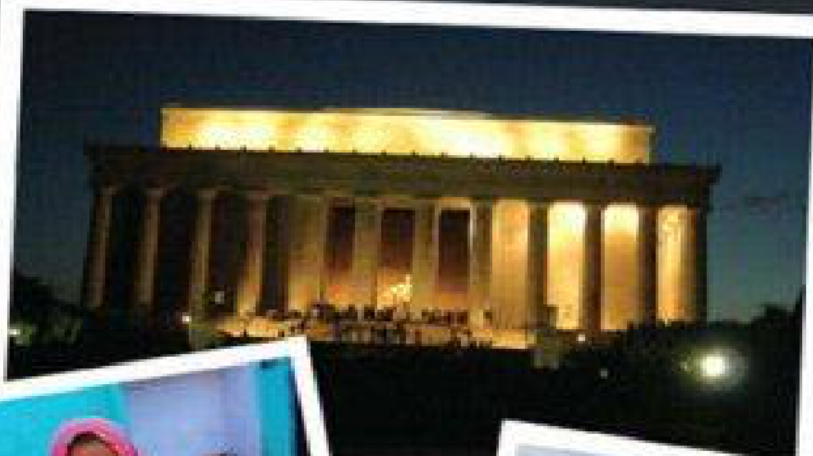
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Blue Pixel Guide to Travel Photography, The: Perfect Photos Every Time

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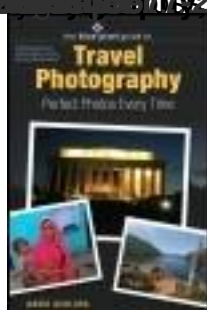
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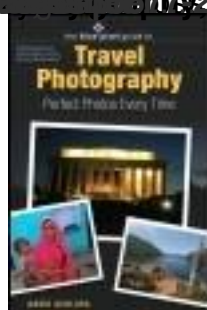
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Overview

When it comes to learning how to take great travel photographs, who better to learn from than the pros whose work graces the pages of all those travel magazines and brochures you've examined longingly?

These are *exactly* who you get as instructors when you purchase this book—the world-famous photojournalists, commercial and fine-art photographers, and trainers who make up the Blue Pixel team (which instructs thousands of students annually through the highly respected Nikon School of Photography). Drawing on years of in-the-trenches experience, the Blue Pixel authors outline everything you need to know to take great travel shots using the digital tools available today. Offering clear, concise instruction plus practical advice, real-world examples and anecdotes, and loads of beautiful photos, this beautiful full-color guide offers everything you need to get the right shot every time. From what equipment to buy to how to set up the perfect shot (plus more advanced topics like lighting and composition), you'll learn how to capture the magic of locales both local and exotic.



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Blue Pixel



Blue Pixel (www.bluepixel.net) was founded with one mission: to have leading digital photographers teach their craft from an unbiased, real-world perspective. Blue Pixel has provided its digital photography expertise to a long list of clients, including Microsoft, Best Buy, Adobe Digital Kids Club, the Nikon School of Photography, and the *A Day in the Life of Africa* and *America 24/7* projects. Blue Pixel's staff and associates all share a common outlook on shooting digital: Make it simple, and make it fun.

Nick Didlick



In a 30-year photojournalism career that has taken him around the world and back, Blue Pixel Associate Nick Didlick has been a staff shooter for Canada's *Vancouver Sun* and *National Post* newspapers, as well as the news services Reuters and UPI. He was named Reuters Journalist of the Year in 1988, and his work has also appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Times of London*, *Stern*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Rolling Stone*. Didlick, like Rob Galbraith, was among the world's first photojournalists to switch to digital in 1994, whereupon he reputedly took to taunting film-shooting colleagues with the phrase "If it ain't digital, it ain't news!"

Bill Durrence



Blue Pixel Associate Bill Durrence has 40 years of experience as a professional photographer shooting editorial and commercial assignments and teaching photography in undergraduate academic programs and various workshop/seminar formats. He worked for 14 years in Nikon Inc.'s Professional and Technical Services Department and taught the Nikon School of Photography for nine years. He is now the lead instructor of the digital edition of the Nikon School of Photography.

Kevin T. Gilbert



Kevin T. Gilbert, Blue Pixel's managing partner, is a 23-year-veteran photojournalist, five-term president of the White House News Photographers' Association, and former chief photographer of *The Washington Times*. He has been a contract photographer for Discovery Communications, and he led the Corcoran College of Art and Design's digital photojournalism department. His work has appeared in newspapers, magazines, books, and advertising campaigns throughout the world.

Reed Hoffmann



Blue Pixel Partner Reed Hoffmann has been a professional photojournalist for more than 25 years, working at newspapers in the Midwest, the South, and the East. He is a two-time winner of the National Press Photographers Association Regional Photographer of the Year award. His clients have included *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *Eco-Challenge*, *The Apprentice*, *Contender* and *RockStar: INXS*. Hoffmann also teaches the digital edition of the Nikon School of Photography, as well as numerous workshops around the United States and the world, including the American Photo Mentor Series.

David Schloss



Blue Pixel Editorial Director David Schloss has worked in the technology and photography fields for more than 20 years, and is the author of *Blue Pixel Personal Photo Coach: Digital Photography Tips from the Trenches*. Schloss is also the Technology Editor and New Products Editor for *Photo District News* magazine, and has written for publications such as *Time Digital*, *On Magazine*, *MacAddict*, and others. He has taught photographic seminars across the United States and his photography has appeared in numerous magazines and Web sites, including *PDN*, *Mountain Bike Magazine*, *Paddler* and more.

Michael A. Schwarz



Photojournalist and Blue Pixel Associate Michael A. Schwarz is a former staff shooter at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the Associated Press, and the Gannett Rochester Newspapers. He is a three-time nominee for the Pulitzer Prize and was a recipient of the Dag Hammarskjöld Award for Human Rights Advocacy Journalism. His work has appeared in *National Geographic*, *USA Today*, *Fortune*, *Life*, *Time*, *The New York Times*, *People*, *Newsweek*, and *Forbes*, among many other publications.

Chapter 1. Choosing the Right Gear

Right place, right time, right gear a sunset along Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



For every photographic trip there is the perfect balance of camera equipment. But most people find it impossible to know what gear to bring until they realize the item they desperately need is at home.

There are, however, a certain number of must-have accessories for the on-the-go photographer. Start with the basics the digital photography tools you can't do without. In this chapter I'll discuss cameras, lenses, and computers, and what to look for in each category.

Figure 1.1. It's possible to take *too* much gear on a trip, forcing you to spend all your time hauling equipment and deciding what to use. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

Selecting a Camera

All decisions about what to shove into a travel bag relate to your choice of camera. For most photographers, the camera is their most expensive and most important purchase. These days there are only two practical choices for the travel photographer: a point-and-shoot or a single lens reflex (SLR) ([Figure 1.2](#)).

Figure 1.2. Compact cameras (also called point-and-shoot cameras) have the advantage of small size. The larger SLR cameras offer more capability, but are also more expensive and heavier. (Photo by Bill Durrence)



The term point-and-shoot is a misleading it's used to refer to any compact camera without interchangeable lenses. An SLR camera is distinguishable from the point-and-shoot because it has interchangeable lenses. (Although some companies now make SLR

cameras with a fixed lens and screw-on attachment lenses.) SLR cameras and specifically the cameras I'll talk about in this book are increasingly based on a digital sensor instead of film, making them dSLR cameras.

What's a Digital Sensor?

Digital technology in the camera market has increased the amount of choices available to the consumer, but it has also turned the photographic world on its head. For more than a hundred years, images were captured using a chemical process in which light striking a surface (most recently a film made from plastics and gelatin) would create a chemical reaction causing one part of the surface to darken create an image.

Until digital photography came along, consumers were limited by the size and shape of a roll of film. A variety of film sizes are available, but none are as small as the sensor in a digital camera.

Unlike film, the sensor in a digital camera is fixed in place. It is a piece of silicon that records incoming light not through a chemical change but by measuring the way light striking the sensor changes the electrical current in each of the little dots that make up the face of the chip. Every time the shutter release is pressed the digital sensor charges up with electricity and then gets struck by light entering the camera. The values of that incoming light are recorded, the sensor gets turned off, and the process begins again, all in a fraction of a second.

Point and Buy

Many first-time travel photographers, in fact many first-time digital photographers, opt for point-and-shoot (aka "compact"). Compact digitals are lighter and smaller than their dSLR counterparts, they don't have the hassle of interchangeable lenses, and they're often seen as less intrusive ([Figure 1.3](#)).

Figure 1.3. Compact cameras make it easy to shoot photos, like these buffalo along the road in Custer State Park. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Cameras come in a variety of styles for three categories of users. A large, solidly built camera designed for the professional photographer is, not surprisingly, called a professional camera. On the other end of the spectrum are cameras that are less expensive, less durable, and often with fewer bells and whistles. These are called "consumer" cameras.

In the middle lies a group of photographers who want *some* of the features of a professional camera (faster shooting speed, improved durability, a few bells, some whistles) but don't want to shell out for features they don't need. These shooters are often referred to as "prosumers," a horrible mashing of words that just means "a nonprofessional who wants some pro features."

Pull out a big prosumer SLR ([Figure 1.4](#)) with a long lens, and chances are heads are going to turn. But take out a compact camera, even in remote parts of the world, and you're going to attract a lot less attention.

Figure 1.4. You won't be inconspicuous if you're using a

big lens to take photos. (Photo by Corey Rich)



The biggest issue with point-and-shoots is their lack of flexibility. There's less room to grow as a photographer with them since you can't work your way up to better lenses and fewer accessories are available. A digital SLR often has interchangeable viewfinders, specialty lenses (such as macros and ultra-wide angles), lens-hoods, accessory strobes, and more. With a point-and-shoot, if you decide you want a wider-angle lens, or maybe a telephoto, you're stuck with what you've got, and you'll need to buy a new camera if you want greater flexibility.

Most digital point-and-shoots are equipped with a 3x zoom, providing a focal length equivalent to about 35-105mm. (See "[Choosing a Lens](#)")

later in this chapter.) That's not too shabby, but it leaves you without a wide-angle lens or a long telephoto lens, meaning you can't capture wide landscapes or zoom in on a distant scene. Some models offer screw-on adapter lenses, but they are likely to produce photographs that are less sharp than ones taken with a single specialty lens.

Compact digitals are often slower than SLR cameras and are known to have a greater *lag time*, which is a measure of how long it takes between pressing the shutter release and having the camera actually capture a picture.

With a long lag time you're more likely to miss the perfect portrait shot as your subject moves, or capture a moving subject just a bit...too...late.

For the cost-conscious consumer, though, a top-of-the-line compact digital can be had for \$600 to \$1000, while a good digital SLR starts around that price. It's best to choose a full featured point-and-shoot rather than a shirt-pocket sized camera, as those are mostly designed for convenience not image quality.

If you're serious about getting good travel shots and opt for a point-and-shoot, you'll want to make sure it has at a minimum these features:

- **A durable body:** Look for models that have metallic bodies and seem well built. If it feels light and flimsy when you hold it, it probably is.
- **A good zoom lens:** A 3x zoom is OK, but a 4x zoom is better. Some cameras have the term "wide angle" in their name, which means that their wide setting is wider than average. That's great if you shoot a lot of landscapes, but you'll sacrifice a bit on the telephoto side as a tradeoff.
- **A high-resolution sensor:** The minimum resolution you should look for is five megapixels. At that size you can enlarge pictures up to 8x10 while maintaining a high image quality. It's a good baseline for shopping.
- **A nice LCD screen:** These built-in color displays are the center of the digital camera world. Make sure your camera's screen is large enough to let you read the menus, and to see the photographs you're composing.

- **Lots of accessories:** This might not be as essential to the new or casual photographer, but if you go the point-and-shoot route, look for models with such niceties as add-on lenses, filter attachments, and remote shutter releases.

There are some wonderful point-and-shoot cameras on the market, and most professional photographers I know wouldn't be caught dead without at least a quality compact digital camera in their pocket, and they always have one for a backup when on the road. If you're traveling with a point-and-shoot, you can still grab great pictures ([Figure 1.5](#)).

Figure 1.5. This photo of Opatija, Croatia was taken while walking back to the hotel after dinner, using a small point-and-shoot digital camera. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Some of the most familiar names in photography—Nikon, Canon, Minolta, Olympus, Pentax, and others—make incredibly powerful point-and-shoot cameras, but some lesser known companies also offer great

bargains. Don't be afraid to look for cameras from Sony, Panasonic, Kodak, Casio, Samsung, or from any company that's better known for making things like microwaves and radios than camera gear. The technology used inside a digital camera is remarkably similar to that used in an MP3 player or any other bit of electronics, so some newcomers to photography are making a name for themselves.

Why Megapixels Are Important

When it comes to sensor size, bigger is better up to a point. For professional photographers, high-megapixel cameras are a great asset. Having the ability to blow up a photo to billboard size or crop down to a small area with still enough detail to create a good print is essential.

But for the nonprofessional, sometimes you can have too much of a good thing. If your computer isn't up to speed, a camera that captures at a higher resolution than you really need just takes up hard drive space and requires more memory and processing power to open that file.

If you're not printing above 8x10, you don't really need a camera with resolution of more than five to eight megapixels. (A five-megapixel camera will allow you to print out a beautiful 8x10 print, while eight megapixels will allow you to crop part of your image and still have full 8x10 resolution.) Keep in mind that when you're shopping for a camera you can't always predict what you'll want to do with your pictures five or ten years down the road. That photograph of the shepherd in Scotland on your 4x6 holiday card this year might be the perfect poster some day.

The Singular, Handy Single Lens Reflex

An SLR has a number of advantages over a compact point-and-shoot. The interchangeable lenses make it easy to compose your photograph in a variety of ways, and the camera's metering and shutter systems are usually more advanced. SLRs universally have a flash hot-shoe that enables them to make use of sophisticated add-on systems.

As with the point-and-shoot camera, the SLR market is crowded, and you want to make sure you get the most for your money. Solid SLR cameras are made by Nikon, Canon, Konica-Minolta, Olympus, Pentax, and others, all of whom offer dependable bodies starting at around \$900. Here are some features to look for:

- **A durable body:** An SLR has a lot of moving parts and you don't want to damage them by dropping or banging the camera. At the \$900 price point you'll be hard pressed to find a body with a solid metal framethose usually appear in the neighborhood of \$1500. But be sure the model you choose feels solid.
- **A good selection of lenses:** Companies such as Canon and Nikon have dozens of lenses for their systems, and their cameras work with compatible lenses from companies like Sigma and Tamron. Other systems have a more limited range of optics, but that might not be an issue if you're never going to buy a \$2000 professional lens. Make sure your system has a good selection of both consumer and prosumer lenses before you commit. (See "[Choosing a Lens](#)" later in this chapter.)
- **The right resolution sensor:** Generally speaking, entry-level digital SLR cameras have a higher resolution than most high end point-and-shoot cameras, though this isn't always the case. If you're comparing a five-megapixel compact against a five-megapixel SLR, keep in mind that the SLR's sensor probably produces a cleaner, more accurate image. That's part of what you're paying for.
- **A decent LCD screen:** In order to save money, digital SLR manufactures often put slightly lower-quality LCD screens into SLR cameras than into compacts because you do your

composition and focusing through the viewfinder of the SLR, only turning to the screen for menu choices and the occasional image review. On the other hand, with a point-and-shoot, you use the LCD for everything from composing your photo to changing your settings. It's OK if your SLR has a relatively small LCD. Just make sure it's bright enough to see in daylight and large enough to get an idea of how your image turned out.

- **TTL strobe system:** A big advantage of SLRs is that they can use accessory strobes/flash systems that mount to a hot-shoe on the camera and work with the SLR to ensure a properly exposed picture ([Figure 1.6](#)). The process of making sure the strobe produces just the right amount of light is complicated and is usually achieved through a system with TTL in the name (that stands for Through The Lens, a type of flash metering, though different companies call their systems by different names like iTTL or eTTL.)

Figure 1.6. The display on the back of this Nikon SB-800 Speedlight indicates that it's functioning in TTL mode, helping attain more accurate flash exposures. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



- **Lots of accessories:** Just as with the point-and-shoot, you want a system that has lots of accessories. All of the big names in

cameras have tons of accessories available more, in fact, than the average photographer knows what to do with.

Digital SLR cameras that come with a price tag up to about \$1000 usually fall into the "consumer" range. They often sacrifice features (things like autofocus speed, sensor resolution, or durability) in order to hit a sweet spot that allows aspiring photographers to get good pictures without breaking the bank. If you're unsure of your interest in photography, don't spend more than this amount on your first camera. But if you think you'll advance in the future, choose a system from a manufacturer that also makes more sophisticated (and more expensive) equipment so that you can keep your investment in lenses and accessories when you upgrade your camera body.

TIP

Sometimes you'll hear the term "35mm digital" used to describe digital SLR cameras. But "35mm" can only be applied to cameras that shoot film, since that term signifies the size of the film used in the camera (and digital cameras don't have film). Lots of companies have kept the term around, however, to make consumers feel more comfortable with the switch to digital.

SLRs that cost \$1000 to \$2500 are often called "prosumer" cameras (**Figure 1.7**). These cameras are faster, more solid (they're usually made of sturdier materials), and more reliable in the long run. A good prosumer digital camera will serve you well for years. For those willing to go all-out there are the true professional bodies, with prices starting around \$2500 and going up to nearly \$10,000 (**Figure 1.8**). While these are the most durable, sophisticated, and impressive cameras on the market, they can really do more to confuse than to aid the new user. A pro camera can have a dizzying array of buttons and switches, and can weigh as much as five pounds.

Figure 1.7. Canon's EOS Digital Rebel was the first

"prosumer" digital SLR to sell for under \$1000, including a lens. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 1.8. The Nikon D70s, left, costs less and has fewer features and buttons, but it's easier to learn to use than Nikon's top of the line digital SLR, the D2X, right. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



When selecting a camera, keep in mind that for any trip lasting more than a few days, it's essential to have a backup even if you're traveling to a region with lots of electronics stores ([Figure 1.9](#)). It's important to know how your camera works, and you don't want to be fumbling with the controls on a replacement camera. Having a backup also allows you to shoot a scene using two different lens focal lengths without having to change settings.

Figure 1.9. Taking a second camera along will let you work faster without having to change lenses, and can also prevent a photo trip disaster if one camera fails. (Photo by Bridget Fleming)



Pros often take two top-of-the-line bodies (or one pro body and one prosumer body), but the budding travel photographer can easily get away with a main body and a point-and-shoot. Budget accordingly that once-in-a-lifetime safari might warrant two prosumer cameras. For versatility when traveling, it's best to shoot with a SLR.

TIP

If you're close to a major city, you can often rent a camera body for a trip. It's cheaper to spend a few hundred dollars renting a second body than to buy one just for a safari or extended vacation.

Choosing a Lens

A good photographer can compensate for a camera body that lacks some features, but there's no way to overcome the poor image created by a cheap lens. Photography is all about the image, and there's nothing worse than having a very expensive camera connected to a low quality lens. No matter how much you spend on your camera body, if the light coming through the front of the camera is distorted by a poorly made piece of glass, you're going to get an image that's sure to disappoint.

The variety of lenses on the market is stunning and the range of choices can make it difficult to choose the right lens for a given situation. A quick overview of some terms can steer you toward the perfect choice.

Understanding Focal Length

A lens's *focal length* is provided in millimeters and is a measure of how much of a scene a lens can view. It's easier to think of it as the amount of magnification applied to a subject with larger numbers indicating more magnification.

A standard lens (from about 35mm to 85mm) creates an image that closely approximates the view of the human eyes ([Figure 1.10](#)). These lenses are great for portraits, shots of details on a building, close-ups of animals, and more. Most photographers consider standard, or "normal," lenses their workhorses.

Figure 1.10. Popular "normal" lenses today tend to be zooms that cover the middle range, like this Nikon 18-70mm. They make good all-purpose lenses, with the ability to cover both wide-angle scenes and those needing a short telephoto. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Lenses break down into a these categories: wide angle, standard, telephoto, and super telephoto. A lens might be 24mm (wide angle) or 200mm (telephoto), for example.

In 35mm cameras (and in cameras listing the equivalent), lenses from 10mm to around 35mm are wide angle. These lenses are great for landscape shots, portraits of people or places that need to show a lot of what's going on, or special effects for exaggerating the sizes of objects or their distances ([Figure 1.11](#)). A wide-angle lens is the one you'll want for photographing a range of lions on the African plain, or for the portrait of a family reunion ([Figure 1.12](#)).

Figure 1.11. A fisheye lens lets you make a very different type of photo, circular with black sides and distortion at the edges. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 1.12. You can make beautiful photos with extreme wide-angle lenses, but be aware of the curvature that will happen at the edges of the frame. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



A telephoto lens (85mm to around 200mm) works like a telescope for your camera, making things look larger than life ([Figure 1.15](#)). These lenses are perfect for capturing distant objects so that they don't look like tiny specs and for near-distance photography where you want to isolate small details ([Figure 1.15](#)).

Figure 1.15. A telephoto lens was used to compress this market scene in Eastern Europe and add to the feel of color and crowding. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 1.13. These colorful mailboxes represent the character of Vancouver and were shot with a short, normal lens. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 1.14. Many people find a compact telephoto zoom lens, like this 75-300mm from Canon, to be the perfect second lens to carry. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



A super-telephoto lens (anything longer than 200mm) is a specialized lens designed to photograph super-distant objects ([Figure 1.16](#)). Super-telephoto lenses tend to be heavy and expensive, so most photographers usually carry them only when the subject warrants their use.

Figure 1.16. Super telephotos tend to be those longer than 300mm, like this Nikon 80-400mm Vibration Reduction

**zoom, and give the photographer much more "reach."
(Photo by Reed Hoffmann)**



It's important to get a lens or lenses that are the right focal length for the types of photographs you plan to make. It's hard to shoot an eagle nesting in a tree with nothing but a wide-angle lens, and it's equally hard to capture a panoramic shot with a super telephoto.

Considering the Focal Length Factor

Another important consideration is the focal-length multiplier, something that's caused by the digital sensor in a camera. A piece of film is a fixed size, but digital sensors come in any number of sizes. When a camera has a sensor that's smaller than the equivalent 35mm size, the light coming through the lens acts as if it's being magnified. The digital sensor's size (relative to film) determines its focal length multiplication.

This is much simpler than it sounds because camera manufacturers list the focal length multipliers of their products. The Nikon D70s, for example, has a magnifier of 1.5 so a 50mm lens acts as if it's a 75mm lens. As a result, many companies have released digital-specific lenses with focal lengths like 12-24mm. On a film camera, that focal length would be ultra wide angle, but on a digital camera like the D70s it would be wide-angle to standard (18-36mm).

Digital-specific lenses usually have a special designation, such as DX. It's something to keep in mind when shopping for a lens.

Deciding on a Zoom or Prime Lens

Most people have heard of a zoom lens it's one that lets you change focal lengths by turning a dial on the lens or pulling and pushing on the lens barrel (depending on the design.) Zoom lenses are versatile because they let you carry around a range of focal lengths without needing a bagful of lenses.

The opposite of a zoom lens is called a *prime lens*, and it has only one focal length. Because there are fewer moving parts in a prime lens, most prime lenses can be built to a higher quality than a zoom lens. Prime lenses are often less expensive than zooms (though less versatile), and usually produce a slightly better image at the same focal length. If your shooting style works with prime lenses (if you're OK moving toward and away from your subject rather than zooming), then you can sometimes save money picking a prime instead of a zoom.

The Importance of the Lens Aperture

Inside a lens is a small diaphragm that allows light to pass through to hit the digital sensor. The opening in the diaphragm is called the *aperture* and is referred to with a number that's known as the camera's *f-stop*. A low f-stop indicates a wider opening that lets in more light; a high f-stop indicates a smaller opening that lets in less light. When the lens is set to a low f-stop, some of the photograph will be out of focus. When that lens is at a high f-stop, more of the picture will be in focus (**Figures 1.18** and **1.19**).

Figure 1.18. A long telephoto, in this case 400mm, lets the photographer get close-ups of wildlife without having to put themselves or the animals in danger. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 1.18. Using a small aperture, in this case $f/11$,

means the depth of field will be increased, allowing more detail in the foreground and background. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 1.19. Using a wide aperture, in this case $f/2.8$, means the depth of field will be minimal, keeping the sharpness just to the subject and blurring the background. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



This has to do with the way beams of light travel before hitting your imaging sensor, and involves complex physics and optics. Suffice it to say that at a low-numbered f-stop there's a bigger opening for light to get in, allowing light rays to come from different angles and creating blurriness in your photo. When you've got the camera at a high-numbered f-stop, there is a smaller opening, which forces all the light rays to hit the same point, so less blur.

In other words, when you use a lower f-stop, less of your photograph will be in focus; use a higher number, more will be in focus. If you take a picture with your camera set to $f/2.8$, there might be only two inches of depth of field. (The exact depth of field depends on the particular lens and the distance to your subject.) Focus on someone's nose, and their ears will be slightly blurry, their shoulders even more blurry, and the background completely out of focus.

Take that same lens and that same subject and set your lens to $f/22$ and, when you focus on your subject's nose, not only will it be in focus, but so will the ears, shoulders, and anything in the distance.

From a practical standpoint this means that the f-stop is crucially important in capturing the photograph you want. Let's say you're looking to take a photo of a local merchant, but the only background is ugly and distracting. Selecting a low f-stop will blur the background, leaving just the person in focus.

But if you want to capture not only that person but also the stall behind the person and the bustling nature of the market, you'll choose a higher f-stop.

TIP

f-stop is pronounced "eff stop" and is written f/XX where XX is the number of the aperture setting. Because this number has to do with optical science it's often not a whole number. What you end up getting is a number such as f/2.8 (pronounced "eff two point eight")

In addition to its aperture, your camera also has a shutter, which is a small Venetian blind-like mechanism that opens and closes to let in light. The amount of time the shutter is open is usually measured in fractions of a second. A photo might be taken in 1/125th of a second, for example.

The less time the shutter is open, the more your pictures will seem to "stop" motion, freezing your subject. The longer it's open, the more likely your photos will have a motion blur.

The tricky thing is that the shorter the amount of time the shutter is open, the more light you need to take your photo (because light has less time to hit your sensor). In a dark scene, you can take a photo with a longer exposure time to let in more light, but moving subjects will appear blurry. Any movement you make while the shutter is open for a long time will blur your photograph.

This is also the case when using a higher f-stop, because the aperture lets in less light at a higher setting than it does at a lower setting. Shutter speed and f-stop correlate. Each time you move your aperture setting one number higher, you'll need to double the amount of time the shutter is open, and vice versa.

As a result, even if you're shooting in daylight, if you set your camera to, say, f/22 (to get an entire landscape in focus, for example) you may need to stabilize the camera with a tripod or similar support.

TIP

Remember that tripods save the day. You don't have to worry so much about your shutter speed if you've got your camera mounted on a stable tripod. Blurry pictures, be gone!

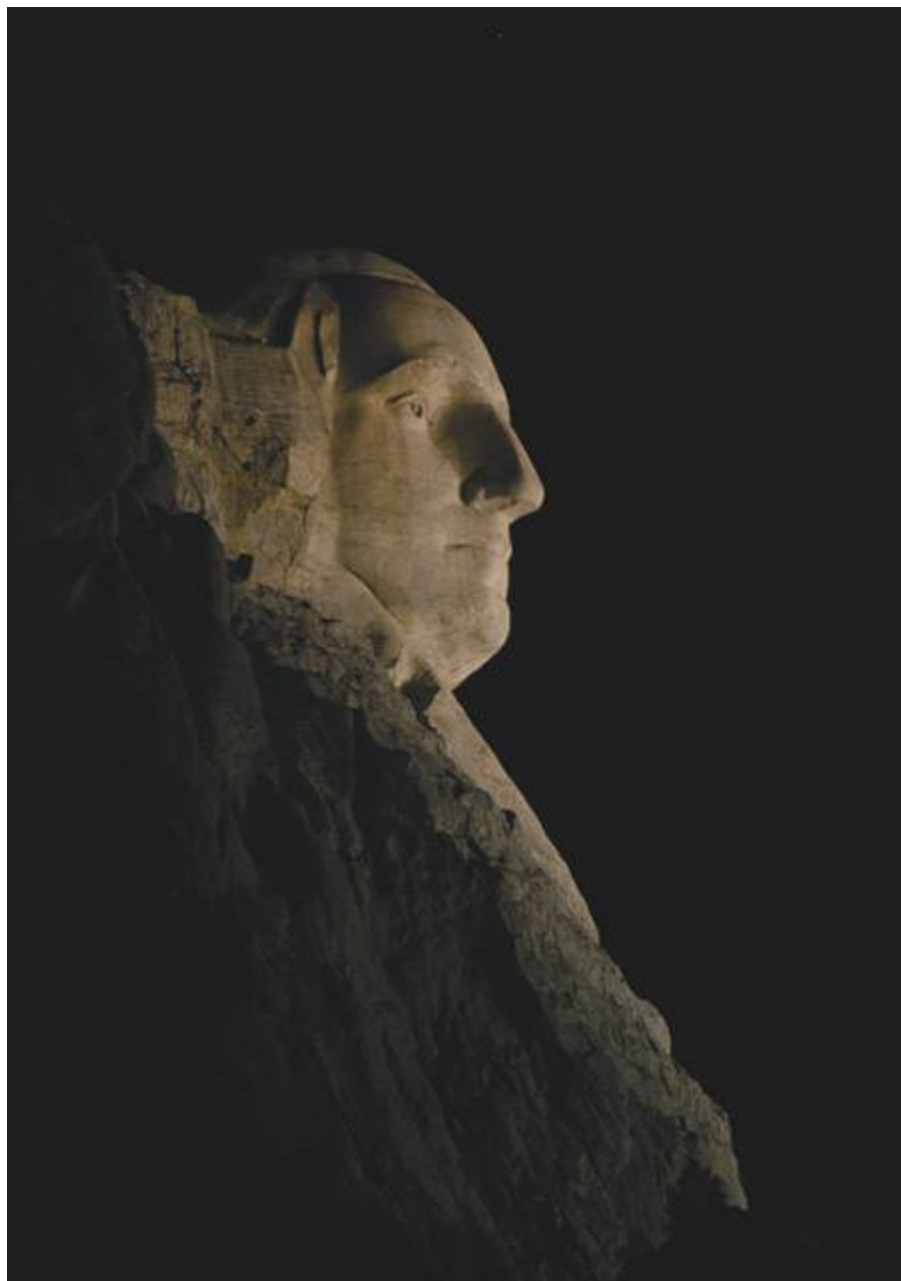
It's all a big game of compromises and pocketbooks. If you've got deep pockets, you could get the top-of-the-line lenses in every category, but you'll probably need an assistant to carry everything for you. See ["Deciding of the Perfect Gear for You"](#) below for some recommendations based on what the pros carry.

Special Considerations

Many manufacturers use special coatings on the lenses and special designs to prevent light from causing distracting lens flares or other distortions. The companies usually use letters in the name of the lens to indicate this. You might see that a company makes a 50mm f/1.4 and a 50mm f/1.4 APO lens (which is short for "apochromatic," meaning "doesn't distort your images"), with the latter one being more expensive and higher quality.

A very recent development is the use of an internal gyroscope designed to compensate for hand-shake or other blur-inducing movement. At first I was skeptical, but now I've come to love these systems, often called Vibration Reduction (VR) or Image Stabilization (IS). They allow photographers to shoot in much lower light ([Figure 1.20](#)). Naturally stabilized lenses cost more.

Figure 1.20. This shot wouldn't have been possible without the lens's built-in vibration reduction feature. Hand-held, the photo was shot at 1/6 of a second with a Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8 zoom. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Deciding on the Perfect Gear for You

I bet you thought I'd end this discussion of cameras and lenses with advice on exact models to buy. Sorry, but there's no single solution for travel photography.

Any choice you make will involve compromise. If you take several expensive lenses, you'll carry around more weight than is comfortable or practical. If you pick only one or two lenses, you might have to settle for designs that don't have APO coatings or don't have a low f-stop number.

Most professionals have an arsenal of expensive cameras and lenses used in the studio and on professional jobs. If pros are traveling and want to bring along their cameras, they'll usually turn to a second set of cameras and travel lenses with more range but more compromises too. The goal is to pick a few good lenses that can do the job of the working lenses, but with less weight.

In the next chapter I'll discuss different packing styles for the travel photographer. First, to give you some idea of what cameras and lenses to take when on your trip, let's look inside the bag of a Blue Pixel photographer. Remember, what works for one person doesn't work well for another, but this a good starting point for lens shopping.

TIP

Armed with an idea of the type of photographs you'd like to take and the areas to which you're traveling, a good photography store salesperson should be able to suggest specific lenses to fit your needs. Nothing beats the ability to get your hands on some lenses and try them out.

Bill Durrence has traveled the world as a professional photographer. These are the tools he packs.

INSIDE DURRENCE'S BAG

Standard Setup for the most flexibility in a light travel package
Nikon D70 body

10.5mm f/2.8G ED AF DX Fisheye-Nikkor
 12-24mm f/4G ED-IF AF-S DX Zoom-Nikkor
 24-120mm f/3.5-5.6G ED-IF AF-S VR Zoom Nikkor
 70-200mm f/2.8 VR f/2.8G ED-IF AF-S VR Zoom Nikkor
 60mm f/2.8D AF Micro-Nikkor
 1.4 teleconverter
 Nikon SB-800 Speedlight (two)
~~Nikon D70 Setup~~ for a day trip or a shoot that requires a minimal setup
 24-120mm f/3.5-5.6G ED-IF AF-S VR Zoom Nikkor
 Nikon SB-800 Speedlight
~~Nikon D2 Setup~~ a variation on the main shooting bag, but for weight-
~~Nikon D70s~~ body
 10.5mm f/2.8G ED AF DX Fisheye Nikkor
 12-24mm f/4G ED-IF AF-S DX Zoom -
 24-120mm f/3.5-5.6G ED-IF AF-S VR Zoom Nikkor
 Nikon SB-800 Speedlight (one)
 Ultimate setup: The gear that can handle any shooting situation
 28mm f/1.4D AF Nikkor
 85mm f/1.4D AF Nikkor
 300mm f/2.8 ED-IF II AF-S Nikkor
 17-55mm f/2.8G ED-IF AF-S DX Zoom-Nikkor

INSIDE BILL DURRENCE'S BAG

Becoming Computer Literate

Digital photography requires significant computing power. While you might not need the most expensive computer, you're going to want a nice machine on which to view, sort, and share your images. (See [Chapter 7](#) for more on photo sharing.)

You might not always travel with your computer (thought most pro photographers do), but when you get back home you're going to want a lot of computing muscle to work on those copious files you've generated.

Avoid the bargain-priced entry-level systems offered by many companies. Instead look for a computer that's advertised as being at least in the middle of a company's lineup. While computer specifications change almost monthly, a consumer-level photographer will probably end up spending just over \$1,000 on a system, while a prosumer might spend a bit over \$2,000, and a pro from \$3,000 to \$8,000.

TIP

Sure there are printers on the market with slots for your digital storage cards, allowing you to print without using a computer, but that's really just a novelty. A computer gives you a place to edit your images, store them, back them up, share them, and print them.

It might feel cumbersome to bring a computer on the road even a laptop but it's the best way to check your images to make sure that you got the shots you want ([Figure 1.21](#)). Plus, with free wireless Internet connections all over the world, you can send people photos of your trip to Europe *while you are still on your trip*.

Figure 1.21. Taking a laptop computer along means one more thing to pack and carry, but it is worth the trouble for digital photographers. You'll be able to download your images, make sure you're getting the photos you want, and back up the photos before returning home. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



If you're going on a trip where you can't take your computer, you can use a portable storage device to transfer your images while you're on the road ([Figure 1.22](#)). You can even use some of them to burn a CD. The problem is that they're usually almost as heavy as a laptop computer, and they don't provide any way to edit or manage your images while you're away from the office. (See [Chapter 6](#) for more information on in-field naming, and why it's a good idea to bring a computer.)

Figure 1.22. The other option for downloading images while on a trip is to use a digital wallet device, like the

Flashtrax by SmartDisk. (Photo by Michael Schwarz)



Companies like Nixvue, Delkin, Epson, and others make portable devices that act as both card readers and data storage devices.

Computers advance at a rapid rate. A great rule of thumb is to look for computers that are advertised for hard-core computer gamers, or video editors. Both these user groups require a lot of horsepower to get the job done. Some key things to look for when shopping are:

- **Processor:** It doesn't matter if you're shopping for a PC or for a Mac, all computer manufacturers have different models powered by different levels of processors. The *speed* rating of a computer isn't as important as you'd think. Shop for computers within the different levels. You might not need the fastest class of processor on the market, but as a digital photographer you should probably avoid the slowest machines.
- **Optical burner:** Most computers these days come with CD or DVD burners. A DVD burner will suit you better in the long run you'll be able to squeeze more backup images onto a single disc.
- **RAM:** Many people overlook the amount of memory in their computers, sticking with the amount of RAM installed by the manufacturer. But most companies put in just enough RAM to

allow the computer to perform basic functions. It's not uncommon these days for a computer to have more than 1GB of RAM. Get one gig of RAM at minimum, and if your computer can accept more, get more.

- **Interfaces:** Your computer needs to communicate with the rest of the world. Be sure the system you buy has at least a USB 2.0 port and a FireWire port (though some PCs will have only USB 2.0, that's fine since all but some pro digital cameras have USB 2.0), wireless connectivity, and Ethernet ports.

If you're traveling with a laptop, you'll want to gear up on accessories, too. Make sure you've got the following before you go:

- **Security:** Essential for locking up your computer in a hotel room (they're not foolproof, so don't leave your computer anywhere that's not reasonably safe). A good insurance policy is crucial too. Most home-owners and rental policies cover computer and camera items, but you might need a separate rider, especially if you're traveling.
- **CDs and/or DVDs:** Necessary for backups (which you can send home) and for image storage.
- **Cables:** Make sure you've got the right cables for your camera, card reader as well as generic FireWire and Ethernet cables.
- **Installation CDs:** If there's any time you don't want your computer to crash, it's when you're on the road. And thanks to Murphy's Law, that's exactly when your hard disk will need to be reformatted. Bring copies of the installer CDs for your operating system and your crucial applications, along with serial numbers for the installation.
- **Electrical adapters:** Most laptops work on any voltage from 110-220, so you'll need plug adapters to keep computing in any country.

Moving Your Photos from Camera to Computer

You'll also need some way to get your images from your camera into your computer. The best way to do this is with a FireWire or USB 2.0 external card reader ([Figure 1.23](#)). Moving pictures over with the cable that came with your camera drains the battery in your camera. Using an external card reader ensures the fastest transfers and maintains battery life.

Figure 1.23. An external card reader is a must for getting images into the computer quickly and efficiently. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Improving Your Memory

Manufacturers ship new digital cameras with anemic memory cards. Before you leave on your trip, buy a few high-capacity cards (**Figure 1.24**). A five-megapixel camera can shoot a few hundred images with a 1GB storage card, but only three or four images with the 16MB card that comes in the box.

Figure 1.24. The rule of thumb is to buy several cards for your camera, and the largest sizes you can afford. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

You'll want a few cards so that you can keep shooting even after you've filled up a card with great travel images. You'll also want to make sure you've got enough cards to keep taking pictures if you lose one or it stops working.

Accessorizing Yourself

Understanding the basics of camera and lens technology is only the first step in selecting your perfect travel gear, but it's the most important step. In the next chapter we'll examine the rest of the travel photographer's essential gear, and talk about packing and traveling techniques.

Chapter 2. What to Take and What to Leave at Home



In [Chapter 1](#), I Covered travel photography basics: SLR vs. point-and-shoot cameras, lenses, and computer equipment. It's nice to think that with no more than these basic items, you too can be a travel photographer.

But then other necessary equipment comes into play, and the simple, idyllic notion of traveling the world with a small amount of camera gear goes out the window. There are chargers and manuals, cords and adapters, tripods and filters. You don't have to bring everything you own on your next photo outing, but it helps to know the options. This chapter looks at the photographic items bound to make your pictures better (even if they do slow you down at airport security), and then turns to some packing techniques to help streamline your trip.

No Power, No Pictures

Digital photography requires juice. In the good old days you could buy a film camera that ran off a single small battery and take pictures for months or years. Digital is a new beast, and while you won't need to take rolls of film with you anymore, you *will* need to make sure you've got plenty of power wherever you go.

These are some of the key items that will ensure that you can keep snapping pictures on the road:

- **Your camera's power adapter:** Some cameras charge by plugging into an outlet via a charging cable. Prosumer and professional cameras often use an external charger (previous page); pop out the battery from the camera body's handgrip and dock it to the charger. Both the battery-charger and the external charger are *must-bring* items no matter where you're going.
- **Secondary battery:** Most cameras have a removable battery. Some use rechargeable AAs, while others use specialized rechargeable cells available at camera stores ([Figure 2.1](#)).

Figure 2.1. Removable batteries.



If your camera uses AA batteries, see if it will take rechargeable ones, and pack those and a charger. You can use the rechargeable AA batteries to save on cost, but if you run out of power you can pop into any newspaper, hardware, or grocery store on the planet to get standard AA batteries. If you must use nonrechargeable batteries, Energizer Photo Lithium AAs are best because they're disposable.

- **Chargers for accessories:** Don't forget that your cell phone, PDA, and any other electronic gizmo you bring along will need its own charger.
- **Computer power adapter and batteries:** If you bring a laptop, keep in mind they are more power-hungry than a third-world dictator. You'll want your power cord and possibly an extra battery.
- **Travel adapters:** Don't forget that not every country uses the same 110 volt power we do, or the same plugs. If you're

traveling outside the United States you'll likely need a travel power converter ([Figure 2.3](#)).

**Figure 2.2. A little research ahead of time will help you know what kind of power adapters and converters you might need for an overseas trip.
(Photo by Reed Hoffman)**



Figure 2.3. Car inverters are fairly inexpensive and can be plugged into the cigarette lighter outlet to enable you to charge batteries while on the road. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Don't just buy a converter with a plug for the country you're going to, buy it with adapters for any nearby countries as well. I know people who have flown to England and then decided to take a trip to France and couldn't plug in chargers anywhere.

- **Power inverter:** Many pros carry a power inverter ([Figure 2.3](#)), a specialized device that allows them to keep shooting when mere mortals are out of juice. They are available at Radio

Shack, and other electronic stores. A power inverter has a 12 volt automobile cigarette lighter adapter on one end and a 110 volt outlet on the other. It turns your rental car into a mobile power plant.

- **Universal adapters:** A few companies have started to make all-in-one power adapters that use interchangeable heads to power any number of items. These devices are also available at Radio Shack and other electronics stores. The only downside is that all your electricity comes through one single device. If it breaks you can't power anything.
- **Power strips:** Take one. Many hotel and motel rooms only have one available outlet.

TIP

While it might seem like a good idea to put chargers and cables into your checked luggage while your camera gear stays in your carry-on, keep with you any chargers you can't shoot without. If your luggage gets lost, you'll still be able to take pictures.

Improving Your Image

Power cords and batteries don't do a thing to help your pictures look better, but they allow you to keep shooting anywhere there's electricity. The next group of essential photographic items, however, will help you take better pictures. With few exceptions, these things should find their way into almost any camera travel bag, regardless of a trip's duration.

- **Tripods:** A tripod is indispensable. Skip the electronics store for your travel tripod (where poor construction and shoddy craftsmanship prevail) and head to a professional photographic store. The perfect home tripod can be heavy and bulky, but for traveling you'll want to look for something compact yet solid enough to stabilize your shots.

TIP

Tripods from electronics stores are made from cheap metals and plastics, while high-quality tripods are made of materials like magnesium, carbon fiber, and aluminum. Play around with tripods to see what you like. Look for one that folds into a compact, lightweight size, but still unfolds quickly, and is solid enough to prevent toppling in wind or on an uneven surface.

- **Flashes:** Your camera might come with a built-in strobe, and while in-camera flash units are better than nothing, your best bet is to pick up an accessory strobe from your camera manufacturer. These units slide into the metal bracket, known as a "hot shoe," on the top of your SLR and communicate directly with your camera to properly expose your image in a wider range of lighting situations.
- **Manuals:** Even though you've read all your manuals, bring them with you. Travel photography is the perfect opportunity to try out

new things, and it's the time you're most likely to forget which button on your camera gives you a depth-of-field preview.

- **Filters:** By simply putting a piece of glass in front of your lens you can drastically change what your camera sees ([Figures 2.42.6](#)). Some people swear by special-effects filters designed to produce starbursts or rainbows. Forget about filters that make your subjects look like they are in an '80s music video and stick to a few key filters.

Figure 2.4. Two filters were used to create this photo: a graduated neutral density to darken the bright sunset sky, and a graduated yellow to add more color to it.



Figure 2.5a. This picture was made without any filtration.



Figure 2.5b. This image was shot with a circular polarizer on the front of the lens, darkening the sky and making the yellow shoots of foliage more visible.



Figure 2.6. A variety of filters can expand your ability to work in unusual lighting conditions, as well as let you be more creative. At left is a circular polarizer, while in the center and at right are graduated filters. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



The glass on the front of your lens can get scratched easily, so pros put a high-quality screw-on filter in front of that surface and leave it there, both for protection and to eliminate distortions caused by some lighting conditions. The two most commonly used choices are called UV filter and Skylight. Both block stray light rays that our eyes can't detect but that detract from picture quality.

Another often-used filter is a circular polarizer, which helps improve the photograph when shooting scenes in very high-contrast areas with a lot of sky (like a desert). Polarized glass is used in good-quality sunglass lenses and can make the colors in a dull, washed out landscape seem more rich and vibrant.

Finally, there's a neutral-density (ND) filter, a high-quality piece of glass that's tinted (also like sunglasses) so that you can shoot at a low ISO even in bright light. This filter is more important when using a lens that has a maximum aperture around $f/1.4$ - $f/2.8$. Those lenses let in a lot of light, so it's not always possible to take a photo in very bright light without overexposing your image. Placing a ND filter over the lens doesn't change the balance of any colors, but it blocks some of the incoming light. Without an ND filter, you also won't be able to take a slow exposure shot (to make a waterfall look blurry for example) in bright daylight.

TIP

In the last chapter I discussed lenses, and how a cheap lens can ruin an image and how important it is to look for good construction and optical quality. The same is true with filters because they alter the light that strikes your digital sensor. Companies like Tiffen, Hoya, Conkin, and B+W have been making excellent filters for decades.

- **Tools:** There are a few tools that can help you fix problems and keep your gear working. Pack a multitool (like a Leatherman) and a small flashlight. I'm a big fan of Mini MagLites though lots of photographers I know prefer campingstyle headlamps ([Figure 2.7](#)). And nothing saves the day like a small roll of duct tape, or even a nice long strip of it wrapped around the handle of your small flashlight or the leg of your tripod (or both).

Figure 2.7. Having a flashlight handy, or even better, a headlamp, will allow you to see what you're doing where there's no power. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Remember to pack tools in your checked luggage, not in your carryon bags, or else the nice people at TSA will confiscate them.

Tricks of the Trade

The final category includes items that aren't *essential*, but they'll sure help in certain situations. This isn't an exhaustive list all photographers have favorite items to fill the nooks and crannies of their luggage but these are some of the stalwart heroes.

In most of the modern world, these items can be left behind and purchased as needed at a local grocery, pharmacy, or hardware store.

- **Zip-lock bags:** No better thing has been invented, except maybe duct tape. Pack a variety of sizes in order to keep gear dry and protected from the elements. You can even take a zip-lock bag and fill it with sand to make a great camera support, or tripod weight.

TIP

What's a tripod weight? It's a tool to make a shaky tripod more stable. Hang a bag full of sand (or some other weight) from the legs of the tripod to increase stability.

- **Garbage bags:** These are for you and your gear. Cut a hole in the bottom of one to make a poncho, or hold it over your camera and tripod when you shoot on a rainy day.
- **Zip ties:** These are perfect for securing items together and they're lightweight. Just be sure to bring something you can use to cut them off when you need to (such as the multitool mentioned above).
- **Sensor cleaner:** The imaging sensor in a digital SLR gets dirty from time to time. Bring a small squeeze bottle of sensor cleaner (available at good camera stores) or pick up a baby nasal

aspirator at the pharmacy ([Figure 2.8](#)).

Figure 2.8. Keeping the sensor clean is a must, and a simple blower bulb (which can be purchased at a drugstore) is a good, fast method for blowing off dust. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Be sure you read your camera's manual before you clean your sensor, and make sure you don't scratch the sensor while cleaning it. If you do, you'll turn your camera into an instant paperweight.

- **Reflectors:** Bouncing a bit of light onto a subject can help lighten shadows and brighten the subject ([Figure 2.9](#)). A number of companies, such as Lumiquest and Photoflex, make reflectors

that fold up into a tiny lightweight shell. You can always use aluminum foil taped to a piece of cardboard.

Figure 2.9. Reflectors fold up into small packages, and can be used to block sunlight as well as reflect light into shadowed areas. (Photo by Mirjam Evers)



- **Lens cleaners:** Rubbing your lens with a T-shirt will work (unless your T-shirt is polyester), but it's better to pack lens-cleaning tissues.
- **Towel:** A small towel will help if you get drenched or if it's humid.
- **Navigation gear:** Never travel abroad without a compass and a map. When you're lost and you don't speak the language, being

able to point to your destination on a map to ask a local for help can be the difference between making it to your hotel and sleeping in a field. I pack a sophisticated Global Positioning System (GPS), which requires more batteries, but I always carry a compass and map too (**Figure 2.10**).

Figure 2.10. If your travels will take you off the beaten path, a map and compass, and perhaps even a GPS, might be necessary. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



A GPS is a handheld device, about the size of an MP3 player, that receives signals from a fleet of orbiting satellites that it uses to pinpoint your exact location, anywhere on earth. The GPS displays a map of the area and enables you to plot your travels, mark points to return to, and find nearby landmarks.

Thanks to GPS software for the PC programs, like Microsoft's "Streets and Trips," and those offered by the GPS manufacturers, you can even download custom maps of your travel destination, complete with local points of interest, such as museums, scenic overlooks, gas stations, ATM machines, and more.

- **Two-way radios:** In the United States, Family Radio Service

walkie-talkies are quite popular, thanks to being both cheap and relatively powerful. Not every country allows their use (check the manufacturers Web site for more information), but it doesn't hurt to carry them anyhow; they're very helpful when traveling with other people. Having a way to stay in touch with someone, even if up to a mile apart, enables you to wander around an area alone, without getting totally separated.

One person could explore the base of an Aztec ruin, for example, while another climbs to its summit. They can use the radio to reconnect after the excursion. These are also handy any time you're photographing in the wild, where natural features often separate travelers.

Choosing the Right Camera Bag

Camera bags are relatively straightforward, but there are a lot of them, and personal preference plays a huge part in their selection. Look for solid construction, thick padding on inner compartments, professional stitching, zippered or Velcro pouches, and numerous places to put things.

And don't worry if you think you'll need more than one bag. All the photographers I know have several, each for a different shooting condition or job.

As with all the bags, there are plenty of great manufactures to choose from, and they've each got bags at a variety of price points. What works well for one photographer is a lousy choice for another. The best way to pick a bag is the same way you'd choose a coat: go to a good store and try it out. A good camera store will have dozens of bags, so spend some time putting them on and seeing how they feel. There's nothing worse than having a poorly made bag digging into your side for a week of travel.

Shoulder Bags

The most popular type of photographic carry bag is the shoulder bag, even though they're often cumbersome and put a lot of pressure on your shoulder (**Figure 2.11**). Ranging from pocketbook size to monster bags you could use to smuggle children, their advantage is that they rest comfortably against your noncamera side and easily flip open for access without having to remove them as you would a backpack.

Figure 2.11. Shoulder bags are a popular way to carry camera gear because it's easy to get into them without putting them down. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Shoulder bags come in a variety of materials, from canvas to ripstop nylon (that thick black nylon found in sporting goods). All provide some means of top-of-bag access to photographic gear and pouches.

Regardless of the bag's size or capacity, straps should be well padded and wide. Interior sections should have sufficient padding to protect several expensive glass lenses. And there should be enough storage space for whatever type of packer you are. There's nothing more dangerous for your camera gear than throwing it all together inside a

cramped bag.

Depending on their size, shoulder bags are great for daytrips and photographic excursions lasting from a few days to a few weeks, but the longer your trip and the more gear you're taking the heavier they become. On an extended voyage, consider taking a small shoulder bag as your day bag, while packing additional photo gear in one of the other types of bags.

Photographic Backpacks

Less popular but sometimes more practical than a shoulder bag is a photographic backpack, which offers greater support for heavy photographic loads at the expense of easy access ([Figure 2.12](#)).

Figure 2.12. Some photographers prefer to work out of a backpack, and simply set it down when they want to take photos. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Backpack bags are essential on any trip that involves extended hiking, cycling, or climbing. In the small shoulder bag arena it's OK to pick a noncamera bag for your gear as long as it's well padded, but in backpacks, look for products designed for photography. Most come with moveable dividers to perfectly cushion your gear and with zippered bag access spots, clip-on points for additional bags, and other camera-only features you'll come to rely on.

The best photographic backpacks are made of waterproof materials and have built-in rain covers for extra protection. Thickly padded straps are a must, and a waist level cinch belt can help stabilize the bag on long walks.

Rolling Camera Cases

For the ardent plane traveler, the rolling camera case is a boon, a traveling office that can be pulled by a collapsible handle or picked up and carried like a briefcase ([Figure 2.13](#)). Some also have backpack

straps tucked behind a zippered pouch, making them even more useful.

Figure 2.13. If you're going to be moving the cases around yourself, look for models that have wheels built-in. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



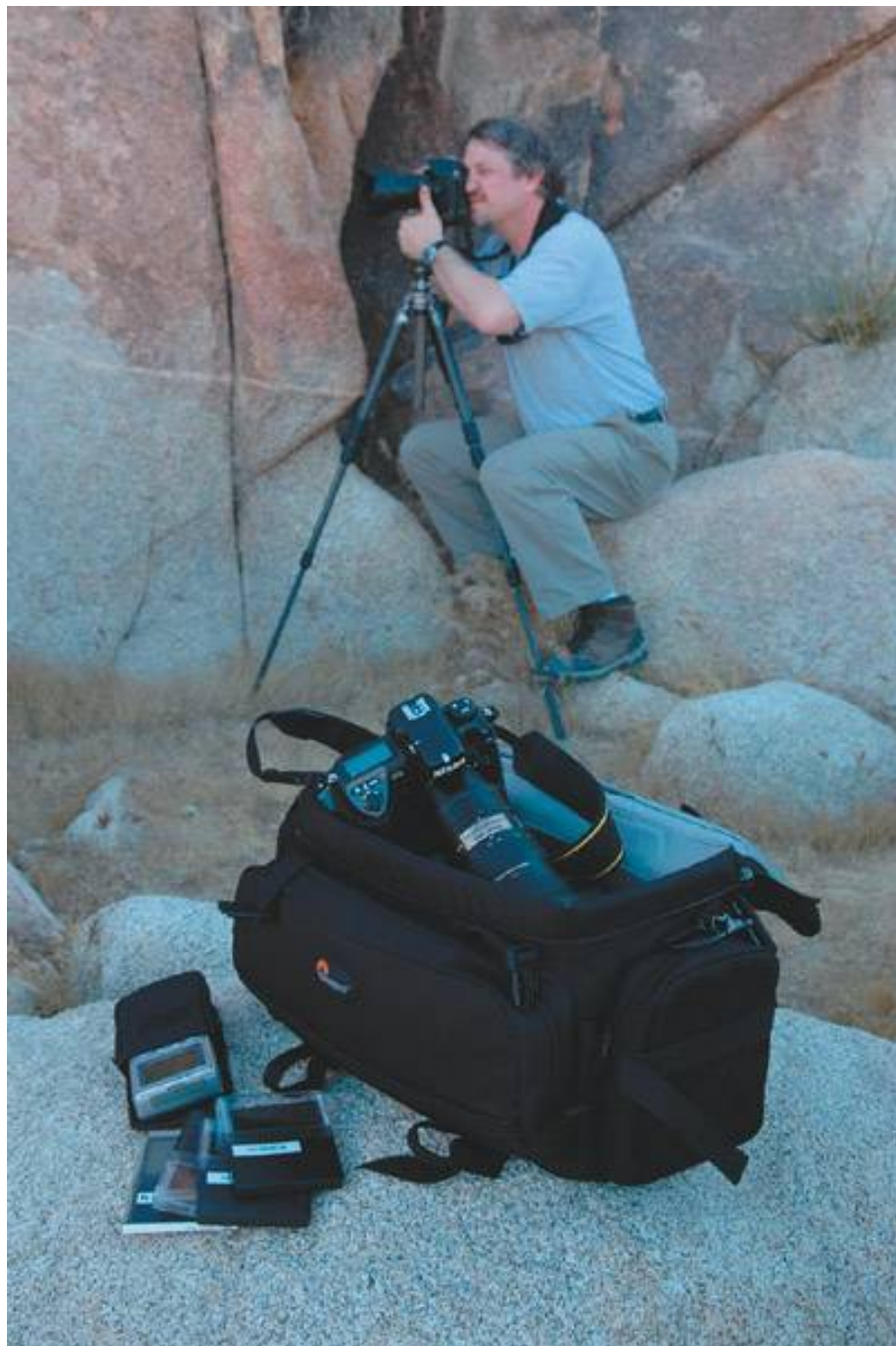
The internal plastic or metal frames required to add stability to the

rolling bags often make them feel less portable than a backpack or shoulder bag, and they tend to weigh much more than either other option even when they're the same size. But they're a great choice for long-weekend photo jaunts because of their flexibility and the amount of carrying space. Many of these bags also feature laptop pouches, enabling you to carry your camera gear and computer gear in the same pack.

Hard-shell Cases

When it comes to weeks-long photo trips or any situation where your camera gear will get thrown into a plane's cargo hold instead of transported safely in the overhead compartment, turn to a hard-shell case ([Figure 2.16](#)) constructed of durable plastics or metals.

Figure 2.16. Large shoulder bags allow a photographer to carry a second camera as well as other accessories, like filters and a digital wallet. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



These cases feature oversized latches, and come with either moveable padded inserts or foam called "pick and pluck" that allows you to customize the configuration of your box. Of course, if you

change your gear setup, you'll need a new set of foam.

Pelican has long been a trusted name in hard-shell photo cases, and while it's not the only player, its containers are the ones to measure others by. Some models now come with wheels and handles, making them much more transportable.

Figure 2.14. For shipping large amounts of equipment, it's hard to beat the hard cases, which are designed to protect your gear from the rigors of travel. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Can't take it with you? Insure the heck out of your camera gear and ship your equipment to your destination by overnight delivery.

Hip Packs

While they aren't the most visually stunning accompaniments to your wardrobe, hip packs are a good way to extend your storage options without bolting things onto a camera bag ([Figure 2.15](#)). Stash small, frequently used items in your hip pack so you don't have to disturb the contents of your shoulder bag. Or head out with a camera over your shoulder and some memory cards in your pouch for the ultraminimalist approach.

Figure 2.15. Some photographers prefer smaller bags that can be worn on the waist, taking the weight off the neck and shoulders. (Photo by Dick Whipple)



TIP

Since you can't see behind you, fanny packs are a more theft-prone solution than hip packs. Try wearing yours with the pack in the front or use it to store a light raincoat or gloves, but don't put in expensive camera gear if it's exposed.

Computer Bags

When shopping for a bag, be sure to consider your computer needs. If you're traveling with a laptop you'll either want to carry it in its own padded bag, or chose a style of camera bag with a compartment for computer gear. These models are usually designated as being for photojournalists (since news photographers need to take both a computer and camera at all times), but they work for anyone.

If your computer is going in a separate bag, keep that in mind when picking your photo bag. No mater how you try, you can't wear two backpacks. If it's going in your camera bag, remember to pick a size large enough to accommodate it.

Packing Your Bags

Over the years, professional photographers develop a feel for what they need to pack for any given trip.

Minimalists pare their equipment to the essentials, adjusting their shooting style to what will fit in a small travel bag.

Specialists pack their bags to match the circumstances they'll encounter, ensuring they have a flexible enough setup to meet just about any situation. On one shoot they might sacrifice some low-light shooting for the ability to pack a telephoto lens, while another trip might find them with lots of flash lighting equipment but no tripod.

Pessimists pack everything. Laden with bags and boxes of gear, pessimists can shoot in the field with the same flexibility as in the studio, if only they can find everything they've packed.

For most trips, packing like the pessimist is extreme overkill. You'll be forced to drag your gear around wherever you go (or risk having it lifted from your hotel room) and won't really be able to find anything when you need it.

That's not to say there's no reason to travel this way. Ever see a catalog or magazine shot of a beautiful model on a beautiful beach wearing beautiful clothes? Chances are the photographer brought trunkloads of photo-graphic gear. Of course, there were several assistants, a makeup artist, a wardrobe manager and an art director.

Do yourself a favor. Pack as light as you can for any trip without sacrificing your ability to capture the perfect photograph. How do you do that? Read on!

The Minimalist

This is the most romantic but perhaps the least functional style of travel photographer.

The minimalist traveler usually chooses a small shoulder camera bag, the smallest prosumer or pro dSLR camera body, and one or two

lightweight lenses. Many minimalists will opt for a prime lens with a big aperture rather than a combination of zooms.

The minimalist's bags will often feature the most slimmed down selection of gear: extra batteries, a filter or two, a few compact flash cards, and some lens cleaners.

At the upper end of the minimalist approach are photographers who take a main pro dSLR body and a secondary prosumer or compact digital body, as many as three lenses, a strobe, and a small selection of accessories: nothing too heavy, but enough flexibility to get the job done.

The Specialist

Most photographers fall into the category of specialist, picking gear according to the trip's length and subject matter. A specialist will often pack two pro or prosumer dSLR camera bodies and a backup point-and-shoot, flash units for each camera, and a nice range of lenses.

A large shoulder bag, a backpack bag, or a rolling bag is usually the primary packing solution for specialists, though they might bring a primary gear bag along with a smaller shoulder bag or hip bag for daily shooting.

Specialists pack enough accessories to keep shooting for days at a time but not so much that they're bogged down. Pockets of their bags will have card readers, batteries, filters, and cleaners. Specialist can handle emergencies, thanks to the tools they packed, and cover their gear bags and cameras with plastic sheeting when it rains.

The Pessimist

You can spot the pessimist from miles away, dragging crates of gear

packed with every conceivable camera body, every lens, and every photographic accessory ever built.

Some shoots call for this approach, but usually only for the hard-core working photographer. When a trip calls for the pessimist packing style, opt for several hard shell cases and a shoulder or backpack bag. And make sure you bring an assistant.

Figure 2.17. Some photographers insist on packing everything but the kitchen sink when traveling, and usually need an assistant or a chiropractor. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Minimalist, Specialist, or Pessimist?

You've probably guessed by now that there's no "right" way to travel. Some shoots will call for the minimalist approach, while others might demand you pack like the pessimist. Evaluate your travel needs and pack accordingly. Just keep in mind that it's usually better to carry too many things than to have the item you desperately need sitting in your house, hundreds or thousands of miles away.

Chapter 3. Preparing for Your Photographic Adventure

Knowing that the steam from the hot springs at Yellowstone National Park is more visible in the cool morning air can help you plan to be there at the right time. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



A photographic journey is 80 percent preparation and 20 percent vacation. Planning the perfect trip requires a bit of mental elbow grease and a lot of time finding resources, looking up information, and managing logistics. In the end, work you do before you go pays off in spades when you see your photographs (previous page).

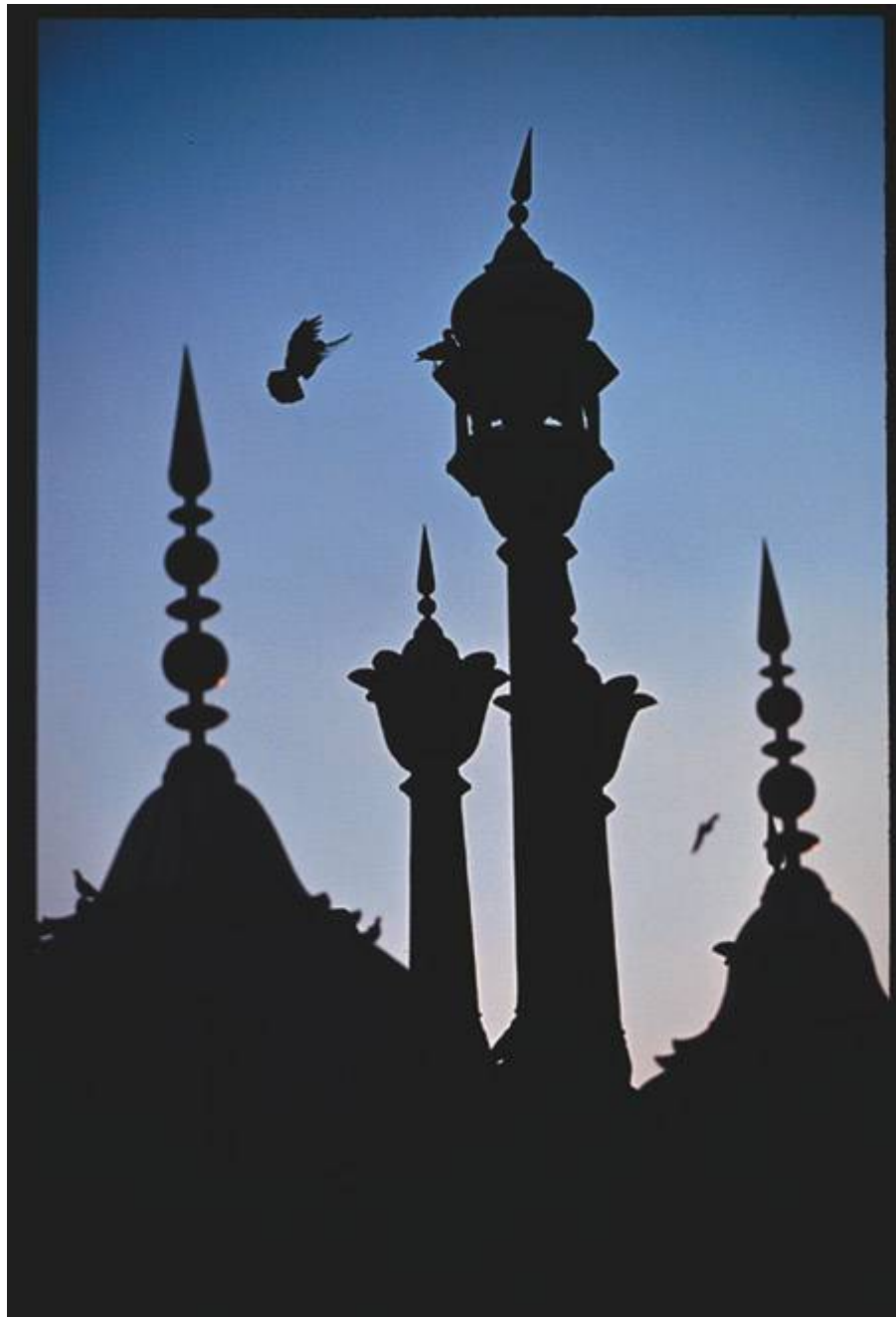
Years ago, planning a vacation was a straightforward yet inaccurate affair for the novice travel photographer. Few resources existed besides travel agents, a handful of travel books, and a few travel-related magazines such as *National Geographic*.

Today, there are almost unlimited ways to find information about your destination. This can make it easier to plan your trip, but it can also bog you down with useless reams of data on nonphotographic topics.

Doing Your Research

Few people wake up in the morning and think, "I'd like to find an exotic locale in which to take pictures!" Instead most people have some general ideas in mind for photographic destinations ([Figure 3.1](#)).

Figure 3.1. A photo trip to India is almost guaranteed to produce good pictures. Photographing these spires at sunset, the photographer got lucky when a bird decided to land on one. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Whether you've got a destination in mind or you're one of the few who is starting from scratch with nothing more than a plan to shoot in some foreign city, you're in luck. Resources abound for the photographer seized by wanderlust.

TIP

Blue Pixel photographer Reed Hoffmann, having cut his teeth as a newspaper photographer, is always prepared for the unexpected. "For me, part of the challenge is seeing something with a new eye and making the most of it," says Hoffmann.

With decades of experience under his belt, Hoffmann is the Eagle Scout to your average travel photography Cub Scout. In other words, it takes a lot of years of preparation and planning to be able to travel without any preparation and planning.

Using Search Engines and Photo Blogs

It's not called the World Wide Web for nothing. In fact, it's rarely called that these days, but the Web is a terrific information resource. Search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Ask Jeeves, Metacrawler, and others can save you a considerable amount of time when preparing for your trip. But they can also deliver an overwhelming quantity of information, not all of it directly relevant. Most search engines offer tips and techniques to help you separate the useful from the useless. Look for the words "Advanced Web Search" or something similar in a central location on the site's home page. Clicking on the phrase takes you to a well-organized page that guides you through a fill-in-the-blanks approach to searching for information. Using that page will aid you in refining and narrowing your search and save you a lot of time. Also, for search tips and a couple of online tutorials on how to get the most out of your search engine of choice, check out the Search Engine Showdown Web site's "Learning About Searching" page (<http://searchengineshowdown.com/strat/>).

As useful as the search engines are, I think the myriad online photo blogging communities are also an excellent place to start your

research. A *blog*, short for *Web log*, is an online journal, and a *photographic blog* is a site where people post photographs as their journal entries. Some of the hottest photoblogs are www.flickr.com and www.textamerica.com (though dozens more exist) where thousands and thousands of photographers worldwide post images every day. Photoblogs.org (www.photoblogs.org), "a resource designed to help people find all kinds of photoblogs," is an excellent, frequently updated directory of photoblogs.

Finding what you're looking for on a photoblog is straightforward. In the search box on a photoblog site, type the name of a city, country, or region you'd like to visit; what comes back is a photographic collagea patchwork mosaic of any place you'd ever want to travel. Though nowhere near exhaustive, these blogs not only give you an idea of what an area is like, but what sort of images people take when they go there. Best of all, these are interactive communities, so you can post questions to the photographers and get firsthand feedback on your destination.

Beginning Your Trip with Magazines, Books, and Libraries

Despite the wealth of electronic information online (or maybe because of it), books and magazines have flourished in this digital age ([Figure 3.2](#)).

Figure 3.2. Despite the abundance of online material, you'll also want to visit your local library and bookstore to research the area you'll be visiting. Having a guidebook to take along can be invaluable. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Even I got into technology that I should have a USB cable running out of my noggin. I spend most of my pretrip hours poring over books and magazines. Not to say I don't use the Web; I couldn't get anywhere without it, but I like to start researching destinations the old-fashioned way.

If you're like me, to get started, head to the library or megabookstore and look over books like the *Lonely Planet* guides (chock-full of insider tips for someone who wants to travel like a local) and *Let's Go* (designed for college students on a budget, but also full of excellent tips); then turn to more traditional guidebook series such as *Frommer's* and *Rick Steves'*.

In the periodicals section, you can find any number of travel magazines, including *Condé Nast Traveler*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Outside*, *Men's Journal*, and more, all of which cater to the traveler and provide specific information on destinations, such as the best ways to get there and the best things to do while you're there.

Many of these magazines have extensive Web sites with articles from back issues, travel guides, and forums in which readers discuss their trips and upcoming adventures.

TIP

Blue Pixel shooter Bill Durrence has an interesting approach to travel resources. When he's planning a trip, he rounds up postcards for the area and checks them out. A postcard is the prepackaged version of what an area has to offer. This not only helps him figure out what the local resources are but it gives him an idea of what kinds of photographs are overplayed. See, every postcard looks just about the same. A photograph of a landmark shot in a certain way on one card means that dozens or hundreds more have the exact same shot. If you want a photo that looks like a postcard, buy the postcard.

TIP

The active travel photographer should also flip through the pages of sports magazines such as *Bicycling*, *Backpacker*, *Paddler*, and other publications that cater to the outdoor sports enthusiast. Each month they usually feature a location guide full of travel tips.

Board-Certified Help

Some of the most helpful (and often overlooked) travel resources are the tourist boards and chambers of commerce of both US and foreign cities and states. Usually paid for by tax dollars, these entities exist solely to provide information and assistance to the visitor. They're able to provide maps and guides, connections to local hotels, tour guides, and more.

Some tourist boards are able to book plane travel and in-country reservations, which can be particularly helpful if you're headed to a country with a language you don't speak. Because they're essentially paid to

market their country, these organizations stay up to date on all the activities and events that might make photographic subjects (**Figure 3.3**).

Figure 3.3. There's a Bridge Day festival every year in West Virginia where people are allowed to parachute off the New River Gorge Bridge. It's a great place to make unusual photos. A tourist board can help you find these types of events. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

The easiest way to find a foreign tourist board is to search for it on the Web, though most travel books and travel agents have contact information for them as well.

In the United States, the local version of the tourist board can provide an amazing amount of assistance, hooking up photographers with locals who can help charter vehicles, plan sightseeing trips, and more. Even if you don't contact these agencies before you leave, keep their numbers handy in case you need assistance when you're on your trip. Just remember, these people are often busy. They'll be better able to help you if they know you're coming.

Don't Forget Travel Agents

It might seem as if they are holdovers from a bygone era, but professional travel agents are still among the best resources around. Professional travel agents know the best locations to visit and to avoid, they're able to book travel on planes, trains, and rickshaws, and they can produce an itinerary that includes detailed plans for every step of your journey.

Figure 3.4. Ask in the town you're visiting if there's a local market. Those are always good places for photos, and the souk in Marrakech is no exception. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Sometimes it pays to check out nontraditional resources too. When Reed Hoffmann heads to a new location, he calls up the photo desk of the local paper and asks for guidance. No one knows an area like the journalists who cover it, and most of them are happy to share their knowledge.

Next time you're headed to a new city, give the local paper a call and ask for the photo desk. Let them know you're a photographer coming to the area for fun, and ask for any tips they can give. You'll be surprised at the leads you turn up.

Not everyone likes to work with a travel agent (and some agents get consideration from hotels and destinations if they recommend certain properties), but if you like the idea of having an actual human sit down with you and help you plan your trip, the travel agent is for you.

The Junket Junkie

Not only are there photographers who travel, there are trips designed specifically for the photographer. These travel junkets take photographers to unique and foreign locales expressly for the purpose of taking great photographs ([Figure 3.5](#)).

Figure 3.5. This compelling photo of an Indian woman and child was taken during an arranged village visit on an American Photo Mentor Trek. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Many photography travel junkets are scheduled like fancy group vacations with tours and visitations to photographic locations. Others are educational seminars, with classes and photography critiques.

The photo junket is a fantastic way to go on a vacation that is guaranteed to be photographically interesting. Many of these seminars are sponsored by camera manufacturers and digital photography gear

companies that provide materials for hands-on instruction, thus giving you an opportunity to practice photography while using some of the newest and coolest tools on the market. You can usually experiment with some of the best of what's available for the photographer, from carbon fiber tripods to lenses, to inkjet printers.

Photo instruction trips aren't for everyone, and different junkets are tailored for different types of students. Some of these trips require all the participants to travel together to different locations, which limits the amount of independent photography time, but ensures that everyone has a chance to see the "classic" shooting scenes. It's slower to move as a group, and you're less likely to be able to spend a few hours lingering over something that you find particularly interesting. On the other hand, there are more photographers around to interact with and it's a more social experience.

Figure 3.6. Reviewing pictures at the end of the day during a photo instruction trip.



Other trips (especially those aimed primarily at pros) require participants to research their own subjects and travel on their own to shoots. The classroom portion of such trips can be an intense experience with guest speakers and instructors drawn from all over the professional world.

And of course there are junkets in the middle, trips that provide a bit of hand-holding but also a range of freedom. That's why it's important to research a photographic seminar with almost the same vigor that you'd use to plan your own itinerary. These trips are often advertised in photographic magazines and in adventure sports publications, or at camera stores. And information can also be found online using a search or at Web sites such as www.photographyseminar.com, "a global network directory of photography seminars."

Once you find a seminar you're interested in, check out the list of instructors and seek out examples of the work done by students. Look on the Web and see if you can find anyone who has taken the classes and what they have to say.

Any good photographic seminar should be happy to provide you with a list of contacts for previous students and should be able to answer any questions you might have about the trip. If you don't get your questions answered, don't choose that seminar.

Family Matters

What about the family? Not everyone has a good time taking pictures, so make sure your travel plans include activities for the nonphotographers amongst you. Some photo junkets plan for family members, providing activities for everyone. Junkets on cruises are especially good for a traveling family because there's something for everyone onboard, and plenty to see in port.

Even if you're not on a junket, be sure to plan for your family or travel companions. Your average sightseer moves at a different (usually faster) pace than photographers, who often take their time examining every detail looking for good shots.

The trip you choose also affects your packing choices a junket with gear provided by a camera manufacturer might be the perfect excuse to leave your bulky gear at home and try out some new equipment, as long as you're willing to be flexible with the results from equipment you're not familiar with. Better to pack like a minimalist (see [Chapter 2](#)) so that you can shoot no matter what, and try out some new gear during your session as well.

Planning Beyond the Basics

Now that you've got an idea of *where* to look when planning your photographic trip, you'll want to figure out *what* to look for. Sure, you'll need to nail down little things like how you're getting there, where you're going to stay, and how you're going to get around. But you've also got to figure out what you'll want to shoot and what the conditions will be like ([Figure 3.7](#)).

Figure 3.7. For a trip to New York's Adirondack Mountains in winter, you'll need snowshoes to get away from the crowds. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Some photographers try to avoid being overwhelmed in a new city or country by picking a subject before they hit the road. Often they'll give themselves an assignment like "I'd like to photograph landscape and wildlife" before heading to a national park, or they'll look for "portraits in urban landscapes." This allows them to focus on certain things they want to capture and prevents the overload that comes from trying to photograph everything wherever they go.

There are certain conditions that can affect your travels, the gear you pack, and even the photographs you end up taking. Heading to the desert means that you'll be able to leave your raincoat at home, right? Not if you're headed somewhere during the rainy season, where flash floods and torrential rain can wreak havoc on gear. And if you're looking to photograph a religious festival, it's a good idea to make sure that cameras are allowed during the ceremonies.

Although it's impossible to plan for every possibility, there are a few key things to consider. Some of these only apply when you're traveling outside the United States, but they're all good to keep in mind.

- **Seasonal issues.** The cherry blossoms in Washington DC only bloom at a certain time of year. Hurricanes in the Caribbean make travel less expensive but can be forceful enough to blow your hotel down. Getting an idea about what to expect at the time you plan to travel helps you pack your bags and helps prevent some nasty surprises.

There are hundreds of weather Web sites and many of the major news sites have a search function that lets you enter a zip code or city name to see current conditions and predictions. For US weather, check out the National Weather Service (www.nws.noaa.gov) or, for both national and international weather, the Weather Channel (www.weather.com). Any of the better travel guidebooks *Lonely Planet*, *Frommer's*, *Moon*, and others usually provide information about weather and seasonal conditions. And for more weather information than you could ever want, refer to the University of Michigan's amazing "WeatherSites" page, which its compilers describe as "The list that made us famous...the most comprehensive weather index on the Internet" (<http://cirrus.sprl.umich.edu/wxnet/servers.html>).

Keep in mind that you can take advantage of seasonal changes to get a better deal, have a better time, and get better pictures. Everyone photographs the Eiffel Tower in spring and summer, but that happens to be the prime season for thousands of tourists trying to head up the same crammed elevators. Visit Paris in the winter and you get a much more personal look at the city, for a fraction of the price.

- **Astronomical conditions.** Partly an offshoot of seasonal issues, it's important to know when the sun will rise and set in an area, what the weather will be like, and if any unusual occurrences will happen during your trip. Doing a localized weather search on one of the news Web sites is often the easiest way to get this information.

Figure 3.8. In the early summer in Yellowstone, the animals feed on fresh growth and can be easier to find than at other times of the year. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



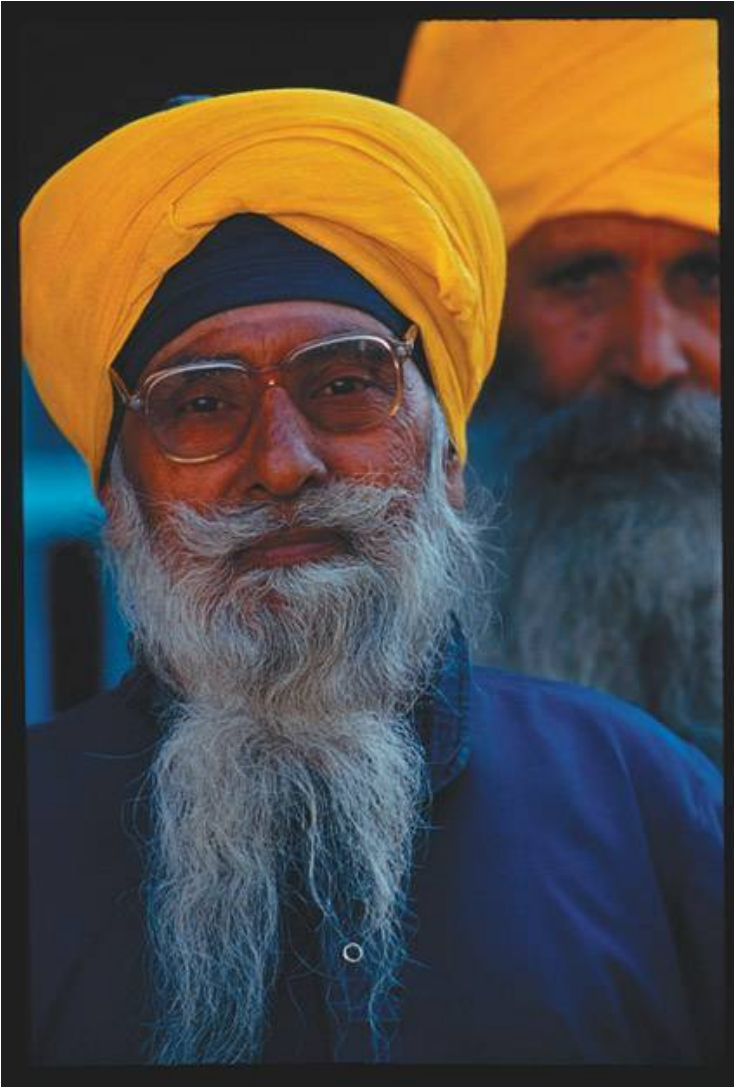
Figure 3.9. When visiting Joshua Tree National Park, you simply *must* come away with a nice photo of a

Joshua tree. Knowing sunrise and sunset times will help you be in the right place at the right time. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



- **Local events.** Even if you do a lot of research, you'll never know when you might run into some little festival or event at a church or on a local street. These will be little photographic gems, and when you stumble on them you'll be thrilled. The larger events and festivals are usually listed in travel resources online and in print by chambers of commerce and travel boards. Planning for these can help you take great local-color photographs and can eliminate the headache of getting your rental car stuck at a parade route when you're trying to drive to some other shoot.
- **Local resources.** Venice has its canals, Holland has its tulips, Punxsu-tawney has its groundhog. Some places are just known for certain things. Find out what they are before you go and you'll have an idea of what objects shape a landscape and where all the tourists are going to be.
- **Religion and politics.** We've got a neat little thing in this country called the First Amendment. Free speech isn't a right everywhere, even in other democracies. Be sure you know a country's legal positions and cultural customs on photography,

Figure 3.10. Polite questions about local customs and cultures can result in invitations to see and learn more. While admiring a Sikh temple in India from the street, Blue Pixel's Reed Hoffmann was invited inside for a tour and his hosts were happy to be photographed. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



You might not work for a newspaper, but if you're caught up in a political demonstration with camera gear, you're going to be treated like a member of the press. Sometimes this will work to your benefit, but often the police are nicer to people they think are foreign tourists on vacation than those they think are foreign journalists in the country to stir up trouble.

- **Local laws.** Before you go to a country, find out about any special laws regarding photography in that area. Major tourist destinations like France, Italy, Spain, and so on, are very open to tourists, but some regions are decidedly less so.

It's a good idea to make note of or even memorize the phone number and address for the US Embassy in the country you're in. The US State Department maintains a list of problem areas and can provide contact numbers for embassies in foreign countries. All US embassies and consulates have their own Web sites, which are listed with links on a single page of the State Department's Web site (<http://usembassy.state.gov/>). And the Department's Web site travel page (www.state.gov/travel) is an excellent resource for a variety of information on international travel. Another very thorough and up-to-date online resource for basic information about, well, every country on earth is *The World Factbook* compiled by the Central Intelligence Agency (www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook). You can order a print version on the Web site.

Giving Your Gear a Dry Run

You've assembled your photographic gear, you've planned a trip, and you're ready to head out on your photographic voyage. There's still one last thing to do. It's time to try everything out and see how it works.

There's nothing worse than getting to your destination and realizing your camera bag is too small or some piece of equipment doesn't work. A few weeks before your trip, pack up everything and hop in the car.

Spend a day in your town or city pretending to be a tourist, photographing the local attractions. Check out each piece of gear to see if it works. When you get home, take out all of your chargers and plug them in, making sure each one works.

If you've got anything that's broken or doesn't work the way you'd like, you still have time to replace it before you leave on your trip.

Taking Your Show on the Road

There's probably nothing more exhausting than travel. How on earth are you supposed to enjoy going some place when the act of getting there takes so much of out you? These days, airplane travel is worse than ever. The lines are longer, the security is tighter, and the aggravation is out of this world ([Figure 3.11](#)).

Figure 3.11. These days airplane travel is fraught with long lines and tight securityespecially if you are traveling with a lot of gear. (Photo by Reed



If you're traveling domestically, you can save yourself a bit of hassle by shipping some of your materials to and from your destination. You can ship big bulky items such as tripods and other camera supports with no problems, and doing so cuts down on the number of bags you carry

with you.

Often a photographer will ship ahead a change of clothing and a set of consumables (blank DVDs and CDs). This frees up the suitcase for photographic items you might need, but still allows you wardrobe flexibility. Insure the package, and if it gets lost in transit you can even head out to a shop and buy yourself some new clothes, which is easier to do than replacing an expensive piece of camera gear that gets lost in transit.

Reducing the number of bags you bring along is a good idea regardless of your destination. Airlines are paying closer attention to both the number of pieces and the weight of luggage and are levying hefty extra charges for excessive weight or pieces. Many photographers I know ship their clothing to their destination, using the allowed weight for more important travel gear.

If you're traveling to a hotel, call ahead and ask if you can ship packages care of the hotel for your arrival. Almost all will happily oblige, as long as you write your name and your check-in date on the box.

TIP

These days the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) allows one carry-on item and one personal item (think purse, briefcase, or small computer bag) per passenger, but that could change at any moment. This doesn't leave a lot of room for your camera gear. You always want to transport fragile items with you as carry on, so pack everything else in luggage that can be checked.

International flights have even stricter regulations about weight, and many won't let you board a plane if your gear exceeds their weight limits by so much as an ounce.

TIP

When traveling internationally, bring extra cash along to help deal with any billing emergencies. "It once cost me about \$400 in excess baggage charges to get out of Kenya," explained Blue Pixel photographer Bill Durrence. "In part, the problem was a crooked gate agent who ripped me off by lowering the weight amount allowed on the plane. I had no choice but to pay the extra or leave the gear there."

Screening Room

Increased security at the airport is great for everyone, but it slows down travel. If you're traveling with camera gear, show up two hours early, and be prepared to wait around. Most Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials have never seen the types of pro camera gear some people take along on flights, and they may ask you to show them that everything works. Be friendly and polite, do *not* joke around, and be sure to cheerfully do anything you're asked to do. As you get to the metal detectors, take off your shoes and coat and put them in one of those ubiquitous gray plastic bins along with any metal you might have (don't forget your belt). Your laptop goes in its own bin; remember to put it through last so that it comes out at the same time you pass through the detectors.

Figure 3.12. Security and metal detectors are now a part of travel from airlines to cruise ships. Be prepared for the extra time and trouble involved. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



The TSA personnel are doing their jobs, and they have an easier time doing that when you're prepared and ready to go when it's your turn. If you have an issue, ask to speak to a supervisor, but remember that you're unlikely to get your way, and you'll end up delaying your trip. Information on TSA regulations and programs can be found at www.tsa.gov/public, and those for the FAA can be found at www.faa.gov.

Practically Speaking

Every piece of equipment you travel with should be written down on a piece of paper, along with the serial numbers of anything expensive. Should you need to file a police report due to theft or loss, it'll be much easier if you have the serial numbers. If you're traveling to a country that sells the same equipment you're bringing into the country, travel with copies of your original sales receipts so you're not asked to pay duties by an overzealous customs agent.

It's also vital to carry a photocopy of your passport's cover and main pages; this will facilitate a replacement if you lose your passport. Leave another copy with someone who has a fax machine back home, so they can fax it to you if you lose your copy.

Information on international travel regulations is available at the State Department's Web site. Check with the Department about any visas needed for your trip, and stay up to date on documentation you need to cross borders. Rules about international crossings can change daily. On one trip I was required to show a passport to enter Canada, but no one checked my documents when I crossed from Germany into Holland.

Vaccinations and Travel Health

Many hospitals, larger clinics, and county health services have a travel health department that can advise you regarding vaccinations you will need when traveling to particular destinations, and also give you the vaccinations. The two best Internet resources for travel health information are the Web sites of the Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/travel) and the World Health Organization (www.who.int/ith/en).

Preparation, Preparation, Preparation

Proper preparation can make the difference in a fantastic travel experience and an unmitigated disaster. You'll still need to think on your feet to handle the unexpected (which I'll cover in the next chapter), but if you take the time to plan a perfect trip, you'll be ready to shoot before you even get there.

Chapter 4. A Good Attitude Makes Good Pictures

Taking a camera with you on a trip lets you capture those special moments, and it can be a tool for opening doors into other people's lives. (Photo by Kevin Gilbert)



Taking a camera on your trip can help open up new worlds of possibility and make you welcome in the lives of strangers, or it can make you appear as an outsider, distancing you from those around you. The difference depends not on your choice of travel destination, but on your choice of attitude.

It doesn't matter if you're traveling for vacation or if you're on a photographic assignment for a magazine or newspaper. All successful travel photographers know the same cardinal rule: Respect the people around you and you will end up constantly surprised by how your trip, and your pictures, turn out.

Travel photography should be about enjoyment and about great experiences. If you're on a vacation with your camera, don't let the desire to capture every event spoil having fun. And if you're on assignment in some foreign place, remember to let the newness of what's going on turn your work into something happy rather than a chore.

Figure 4.1. While photographing outside a Sikh temple, Blue Pixel's Reed Hoffmann and his group were invited in for a tour, which finished with a baking lesson given by women working in the temple's basement.(Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



When in Rome

The easiest way to capture great photographs is to understand your subject. That's true in everything from candids to portraits. When you're photographing a subject, the more you know about the subject, the more your photographs are going to capture what is fascinating about it.

Figure 4.2. Kids love to be photographed, and parents are usually obliging. Always ask permission first. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



In the previous chapter we talked about trip planning and how vital that is to good travel photography, but there are some aspects of your travel voyage that are more subtle than simply knowing what the local attractions are, and what time the sun sets. Some of these topics can

be found in books, but some you might need to feel out as you go. Be aware of and sensitive to the nuances of customs and laws in every region and area as you go.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

There are no thornier topics to discuss than religion and politics. Miss Manners would tell you to avoid them at any fancy dinner party. The photographer, though, needs to be keenly aware of both topics as they form the undercurrent of everything that happens in a country.

Here in the U.S.A., thanks to the right to free speech afforded by the constitution, I can go around willy-nilly taking pictures of things just about anywhere. But I can't invade someone's privacy and I can't break other laws while I'm taking my pictures.

As a citizen of the United States, I have a good instinctive understanding of my photographic boundaries. Standing on the corner and taking a picture of someone walking down the street is allowed, but standing in the bushes outside their house photographing them through their window is not.

These boundaries are different in different parts of the world. Most countries have no right of free speech, meaning that it can be considered impolite or illegal to photograph certain things. In many countries, it is illegal to photograph government buildings, and in some places it is illegal to photograph people without their permission.

Most guidebooks have information on things like this, but you'll want to take cues from your surroundings and from the residents of the areas you're shooting. If you're on a trip with a tour guide, ask about local laws. And you can probably get a lot of help on the subject from a taxi driver; in most countries they're a great source for local information.

Always be alert to the situations you put yourself in. As a former photo-journalist, I have a habit of walking *toward* any commotion or sirens, just to see what's going on. As a result I've stumbled onto some interesting photographic scenes, but I've also found myself in the middle of riots and protests.

Figure 4.3. Be alert. Photographers sometimes find themselves in the middle of tense situations that can quickly spin out of control. When this picture was taken at a Teaneck, New Jersey protest march, someone in the crowd of bystanders had just shouted a racial slur at the protestors. The police officer is restraining one of the marchers. (Photo by David Schloss)



Knowing When to Put Away the Camera

Once, a long time ago, I was in Lyon, France at the start of a student demonstration. I grabbed my gigantic camera bag and found the nearest group of French photojournalists, explaining to them that I was a photographer from the U.S. They took me under their wing and I spent the day photographing a political rally with a dozen newspaper photographers.

The press in France gets treated differently than the media in the U.S. Instead of being ushered behind the police lines and allowed to photograph from beyond the fray, we were running around dodging teargas with the protesters. At one point, a French cop dressed in riot gear tried to explain to me his feelings about my photography. I couldn't understand him through his gas mask, so he raised his teargas rifle and pointed it in my face. I got the message quickly and put away my camera.

You might not work for a newspaper, but if you're caught up in a political demonstration with a bag full of camera gear, you're probably going to be treated like a member of the press. Sometimes this will work to your benefit, but often the police will be nicer to people they think are tourists in the country to vacation rather than foreign journalists in the country to stir up trouble.

TIP

Find out about any special laws regarding photography in the area you're visiting. Major tourist destinations, such as France, Italy, Spain, and others are very tolerant of travel photographers, but some regions are decidedly less so. The U.S. State Department maintains a list of problem areas, and can provide contact numbers for embassies in foreign countries. All U.S. embassies have their own Web sites. It's a good idea to keep at hand the phone number and address for the embassy in the country you're visiting.

If there's any topic that has the potential to be thornier than politics it's religion, though in many countries the two are so intertwined they should be considered parts of the same issue. As a general rule, taking pictures during any religious service is a no-no, but there are few priests, imams, rabbis, or clerics who would be offended if you respectfully asked them about their customs and requested permission to take photographs. It's unlikely that you'll get permission to photograph a service, but such conversations can be both photographically and spiritually enlightening. And the religious leaders may be willing to put you in touch with parishioners who are happy to share their customs.

In many parts of the world the state religion and the state government are the same thing, and there are strict rules about what can and can't be photographed. There might even be strict rules about who can photograph and when.

Figure 4.4. There's usually no problem shooting photos in a church when no service is taking place. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

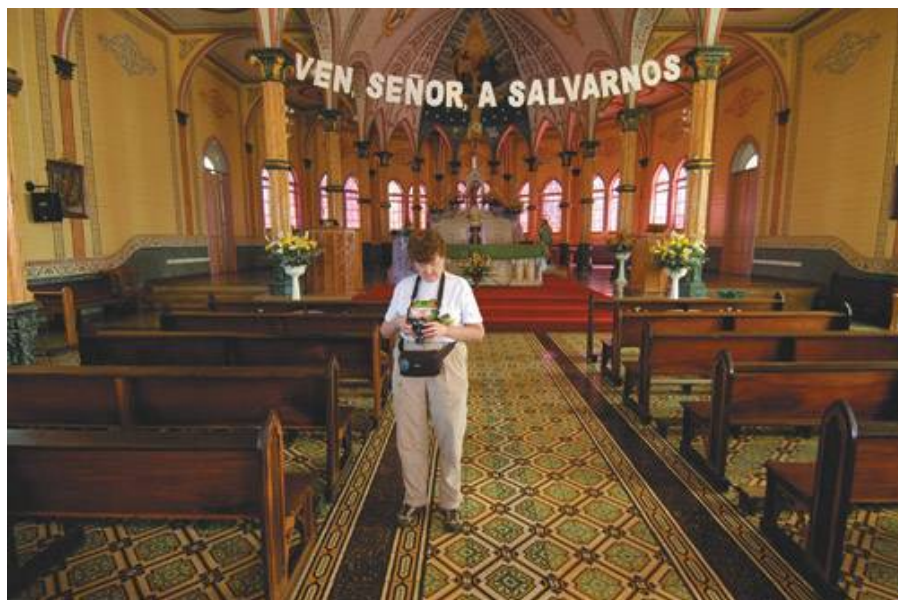


Figure 4.5. Most churches in Europe are accustomed to having tourists visit and take photos, and are very tolerant of it. In return, be polite, quiet, and respectful of worshippers. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Gimme Some Space

Every culture has its own idea of personal space, the invisible boundary between *me* and *you*. Infringing on that personal space can make some-one very uncomfortable. In some areas you might be welcomed into someone's home with open arms, invited to dinner, and offered a place to sleep. In other locales you may find people hesitant to even talk to you. Most good guidebooks will talk about personal space, and give you a heads-up about what issues and behaviors are taboo.

Figure 4.6. Try using a telephoto lens to take a close-up shot without making the subject uncomfortable. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Always, always, always ask permission before photographing a person. Don't worry if you don't speak the language. Simply point to your camera, then point at the person and look for the reaction. If there's a smile and nod, you're good to go; if there's a frown or a negative head shake, or hand waving, don't even think of taking the picture. Put your camera down and nod your head in a "thank you" gesture to acknowledge that you respect personal space.

Figure 4.7. On a trip to Costa Rica, Reed Hoffmann's group stopped at a shop with beautiful carvings out front. "We asked to meet the carver," Hoffman said, "and got a complete tour of the workshop. We had a great experience, made some nice photos, and bought some fine carvings to go with our photos." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Different people have different ideas about personal space and privacy. This is influenced by cultural norms, but there are always people out there who don't like to be approached by strangers, or who are so gregarious they seek out new personal experiences. The extroverted people of the world love to be photographed, but the introverts often have more interesting stories. Spending time talking to people, without your camera involved, will often help make them more receptive to being photographed.

Choose your Shots Wisely

Many first-time travel photographers develop a condition I call *Copius Snaperitis Syndrome* where the experience of taking pictures in a new place is so interesting that they take photos of everything they see. Symptoms include thousands of shots of doorknobs and poodles, the inability to put one's camera down, and a lack of actual "relaxation" due to the constant *click, click, click* of the camera.

If you're on an assignment for a client, then your *job* is to take photos and you shouldn't goof around until you've completed your assignment. But if you're on vacation, you're traveling to vacate, so don't forget to occasionally put down the camera and head to the beach.

Figure 4.8. During a visit to Morocco, Reed Hoffmann came upon an official ceremony including mounted guards with rifles. "It was too good an opportunity to pass up," Hoffmann recalled, "so I asked if it would be OK to take pictures. When you don't know the local customs, it's smart to ask before shooting." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Photographs provide a lasting impression of your trip, but they're not the most important facets of your experience. Your memories, the things you'll carry with you forever, are priceless, and sometimes you can best capture those when you're not even thinking about photography.

The Lucky Trees

Blue Pixel's Bill Durrence was once leading a workshop in Tuscany when he had the group stop to photograph a tree-lined drive he had spotted earlier. The trees were thin but tall; they made a beautiful arc over the driveway.

While the group was standing on the main road trying to photograph the driveway without trespassing on the property, a car pulled up and an older man got out. Durrence assumed that the man would ask them to move on, but instead he explained that the driveway was his and that he had planted the trees as a young man.

After lamenting that he hadn't planted the trees farther apart, he invited the students to his home at the end of the drive where they were treated to a tour of his private art collection. His wife brought a tray of refreshments to the courtyard and served the students drinks and snacks, joined by the man's elderly mother and his brother and sister-in-law. One of Durrence's students spoke a little Italian and the family spoke no English, but it didn't matter. Everyone had a delightful afternoon.



For All the Tea in Morocco

Blue Pixel photographer Reed Hoffmann experienced the sort of magical travel adventure that can be unlocked with a camera, a friendly disposition, and the willingness to "let the day take you."

"I was photographing the Eco-Challenge adventure race in Morocco in 1998," Hoffman recalls, "and I was in a section of the competition that passed through the Atlas Mountains. I managed to get a helicopter lift up to 9000 feet, and then climbed to the 13,000-foot summit the teams would soon cross.

"When I arrived at the summit I found it deserted, except for a Berber guide who had been hired to keep an eye on the radio equipment installed on the peak for the race. His name was Abdullah and as we chatted I discovered that no teams were expected to pass by for several hours.

"He invited me to join him in his tent, and over the next few hours we exchanged stories about our lives and our families. He made me green mint tea, a popular local drink in which fresh mint leaves are steeped and mixed with massive amounts of sugar. Abdullah joked that sugar was the drug of choice in Morocco.



"By the end of our few hours chatting he had showed me how to wear the traditional Berber turban and we had exchanged addresses.

"Teams eventually started passing through and I got busy shooting, then headed back down the mountain before sunset. It was a great

experience, and spending time with Abdullah is one of my favorite memories from Morocco."



Accidental Photography

You've done a ton of research on your trip and you know every sight to see, every destination to photograph, and all the cool must-have pictures. Now forget them. Sure, you should see all there is to see, but more often than not you'll find your favorite travel photographs by accident.

When I hit a new town, I like to wander around on my first day and get the lay of the land. In fact, on most of my trips I just wander around from place to place, experimenting with the public transit system, asking people for directions, and discovering wonderful things. You get a great feeling for an area by walking the streets with no agenda and no itinerary.

Figure 4.9. "I found La Placita Village in Tucson while taking a walk from my hotel after arriving," Reed Hoffmann said. "Great colors and light! spent many hours shooting there." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Ask a hotel concierge where the hottest spots in town are for photography. Go into a pub and (after a few pints) ask around to see what places people in the town think are worth checking out. Or just wander around and see where you end up. I can't count the times I've taken a stroll around a town or village and stumbled upon something fascinating.

Never underestimate the power of chance to guide you, both in travel photography and in photography in general. Sometimes mistakes and "happy accidents" produce the best results.

TIP

The hub of many European cities is the main train station, an excellent place to look for photographic opportunities. Even better, many larger cities offer a walking-tour book, produced by the local tourist board, which are almost always sold at the train station's bookshop. Available in

most languages, these walking tours showcase everything a city has to offer. (I once saw one that said, "This area has all the amenities a good red light district should...") The English translations are usually good for a smile, and the tours comprehensive.

Figure 4.10. Taken while walking home from dinner in Queenstown, New Zealand. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Be on the lookout for street fairs, open-air markets, bazaars, parades, festivals, celebrations, and public exhibits. The mix of colors, activities, and interesting people offers endless photographic possibilities. Better yet, at most of these events people not only let you take their picture, they're *looking forward* to it.

Going on Safari

In the last chapter I discussed photo junketstrips designed to give the photographer unfettered access to photographic settings while immersed in a total photo experience. It doesn't matter if you're on the African veldt or the canals of Venice, a photographic safari is designed to offer shooting opportunity after shooting opportunity. You'll spend days taking photographs without worrying about planning your travels; most junket itineraries are prearranged. A well-organized junket stops at all the most photographically appealing spots. And you'll be surrounded by a group of like-minded people (or at least those who share your hobby).

Figure 4.11. "On a trip to Tombstone, Arizona run by American Photo magazine," explained Reed Hoffmann, "the organizers hired several models so we could photograph some old-time western characters." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



The leaders of these trips will often work with local residents to help scout out both locations and people to photograph people who are happy and willing to show off their skills, job, or cultural practices for outsiders. It can make taking pictures a lot easier. And if you really *are* on the plains of Africa, it's much more convenient (and safer) to photograph a rhino from the safety of your Land Rover than while walking alone through the bush.

Though preplanned photographic trips can take some of the spontaneity out of travel, as Bill Durrence discovered (see "[The Lucky Trees](#)" on page 89), they can also work to your advantage. Still, an approaching pack of photographic tourists can scare away the locals, make people more closed and reserved, and change the dynamics of an event. It's very hard, for example, to walk up to a lone food vendor on the streets of a European town and ask to take her picture when there are 20 people with cameras standing behind you.

In some cases these trips have a set schedule for each shooting activity, forcing you to linger too long at some subjects you find unappealing, but rush past others that you find fascinating.

On many occasions, however, the special access made possible by these trips more than outweighs their downsides. It's best to find a photographic trip that allows for free time, enabling you to combine the shooting setups provided by the instructors, but also to find your own scenes and shoot at your own pace.

From the hardcore photographic junket to the free-and-easy wandering style of photography, it's essential to be receptive to the random opportunities travel offers. Make plans and schedules if you must, but be willing to drop them at the first sign of an interesting conversation or an intriguing detour. Travel is about personal growth, and a camera can often help you uncover some of the world's secrets. Sometimes, though, you have to interact with the world around you without the benefit of your camera in order to get a truly rounded travel experience.

Most of all, if you're traveling for vacation, don't be a slave to the camera. Remember to have fun, relax, and enjoy your trip. After all, that's a big reason you're on the road in the first place.

**Figure 4.12. Don't forget that part of taking a vacation is relaxing. Follow the tips in this book and you'll find plenty of good photos without turning your vacation into work.
(Photo by Reed Hoffmann)**



Chapter 5. Photographing the World



You've Finally Made It to your destination, unpacked your wrinkle-able travel items, ordered room service, and collapsed on your bed in a heap. Congratulations, now the fun begins.

Once you've shaken off the fog of jet lag, get outside and orient yourself by taking a long walk. I usually grab copies of any guidebooks I've brought along, local maps, a GPS unit, a compass, and a bottle of water. Then, depending on the length of the trip, I wander for a few hours to a whole day, just getting a feeling for where things are, and how to get from one place to another.

Make note of tall landmarks that are easily visible from the ground, boundary-forming geographic formations (a mountain to the east, a river to the west, and so on) or anything else that will help you form a mental picture of your shooting location. If you're in a city, try to get an idea for where each neighborhood lies and what it's connected to. Later, this will help you move around without looking like you're lost, and it will give you ideas of where interesting places might be hiding. It'll also help you figure out what areas to avoid.

Figure 5.1. "After 20 hours of sitting on planes en route to Croatia, I just had to get out and take a walk," says Reed Hoffmann. "It also gave me a good chance to see the area around the hotel, including this trolley stop." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



If you wander around clutching maps and guidebooks, your appearance is screaming "tourist." Either bring your camera along in an inconspicuous bag that doesn't say "mug me," or bring only your backup point-and-shoot camera when you're familiarizing yourself with a new locale. And always ask at your hotel or inn if it's safe to walk the neighborhood with camera gear around your neck. (In South America I walked out of the hotel to find a man in the parking lot across the street guarding the cars and wearing a very large gun. I figured maybe that wasn't the right area to wander around in.)

Once you've gotten oriented, get out your gear and get shooting.

TIP

Different countries often have different color palettes, sets of colors they use for everything from packages to houses. Keep an eye out for these color schemes and use them to make your photos different.

**Figure 5.2. "Arriving in San Jose, Costa Rica in the evening," Reed Hoffmann recalls, "we were warned not to stray too far from the hotel. Come morning, with lots of people on the street, I felt totally safe exploring the area."
(Photo by Reed Hoffmann)**



The Rules

While you're out photographing, it helps to keep in mind a mental checklist of the "rules" of photography that will improve virtually every photo you shoot. Like most rules, sometimes these should be broken, but having them in your photographic utility belt makes for better pictures.

Look at What You're Shooting

It may seem obvious, but one of the most common reasons for poor composition is that people often don't take the time to *look*. Before you press the shutter release, take a few seconds to look at the picture you're about to capture. There are occasions when it's better to rush and get *something* than to take your time and miss the shot, but those are rare if you're prepared.

Figure 5.3. The different colors that people around the world use for painting and decorating can be used by you to make your photos stand out, like this one taken in Eastern Europe. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.4. Reed Hoffmann: "The first view you see might not be the best. This scene caught my eye while driving by, so we stopped." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.5. "Later, I found an even better view." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Before clicking the shutter, scrutinize the area around your subject. While looking through your camera, run your eye around the corners of the frame and see if any distracting objects are poking into or out of the frame, or worse, sticking up from behind the head of your subject. Nothing ruins a photo faster than a case of *telephone pole head*.

No Cutoffs, Please

If telephone poles poking out of heads are the most common photographic composition problem then the odd amputation of body parts is easily the second. Without thinking, people often frame their photos in ways that cut off a subject's much-needed limbs. The choices of what to eliminate and what to leave are often amusing. Trees will loom above the subject of a portrait while the person's feet are missing at the bottom of the frame.

Figure 5.6a. Reed Hoffmann: "Sometimes the easy shots are the best. I shot this from my balcony after arriving late in the day in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and never found a better view of the Adriatic. Until the next morning, that is (see [Figure 5.6b](#)). (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.6b. Reed Hoffmann: "I was grumpy when the birds woke me up early the morning of my first full day in Dubrovnik, but once I saw the view from my balcony, I wanted to thank them." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Before you shoot a photograph, take a second to make sure you haven't unintentionally lopped off a subject's body part.

TIP

The time of day and the weather can significantly change the way your photograph looks, so it's important to pay attention to atmospheric conditions as well as subject placement. The times after sunrise and before sunset are often called the golden hours by photographers because of the rich, distinctive light, and some will only work during these periods. Because the sun is low on the horizon, and because it passes through a lot of our atmosphere during these periods, it becomes diffused and casts everything in a warm, soft glow.

By contrast, the light of midday is directly overhead and usually casts harsh shadows. At such times, look for subjects that take advantage of shady cover (a farmer relaxing under the outstretched boughs of a tree or a group of shopkeepers beneath a canopy).

Move for a Better Picture

If you've checked the edges of your frame and don't like what you see, move around and try recomposing your shot. Too often photographers direct their subjects to move when it's much simpler for the photographer to do so. It's perfectly acceptable to get down on your knees to take a low-angle shot, or look for something to climb on to get a better view.

Typically, when people talk to each other they stand one to three feet apart. Yet many people back up to take a photograph, resulting in shots that are full of distracting background. To compound the problem, most point-and-shoot digital cameras come with lenses that default to the widest setting when powered up. Shooting with a wide-angle lens has the same effect as backing off even further.

**Figure 5.7a. Reed Hoffmann: "You can't get a good feel for this beautiful little town photographing it from the pier."
(Photo by Reed Hoffmann)**



Figure 5.7b. "Asking if I could use the upper terrace at a nearby restaurant gave me a much better view, and allowed for an interesting foreground as well," says Hoffmann. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



While we feel comfortable talking to each other from a few feet away, we end up taking pictures that look as if we were a dozen or more feet from our subject.

Moving in closer to your subject is a great compositional trick allowing you to capture more feeling and detail. This won't work for landscapes but serves other photographic subjects well.

Figure 5.8. "Make sure that what catches your eye is what you're capturing with your camera," Hoffmann says. "I liked part of this scene, but what I liked is lost in this framing." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.9. Reed Hoffmann: "Lying on the ground and zooming in on the ferns and pot let me capture with the camera what I saw with my eyes." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Using a Wide Angle

Sometimes your subject demands a wide view, the sun setting on a marshland, or a shot of a tree and a blue boat come to mind.

A wide-angle lens can capture a lot of what's going on, and it's the right choice when you want to include a great deal of background.

Since a wide-angle lens can take in so much, you can use it to create eye-catching photographic compositions. Think about composing your photo so that your subject is close to the lens and something important is in the background. It's an effective way to *force perspective* that can make an otherwise dull picture visually striking.

Figure 5.10. "The blue boat in the foreground and the tree above it made for a natural vertical with a wide-angle lens. Waiting to click the shutter until two people walked under the tree gave the picture even more visual interest," Hoffmann says. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.11. "I wanted to photograph this friendly cat with a wide angle to keep the scene around it in the photo," says Hoffmann. "It was perched on a wall, though, so I had to prefocus the lens and hold it above my head to make the shot." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Using a Telephoto

Some photographs need a more concentrated approach, calling for a telephoto lens. Not only are telephotos good for capturing far-away objects, but also details of objects, signs, parts of buildings. Even portraits of people often look best when you use the magnifying power of a telephoto.

Figure 5.12. Reed Hoffmann: "This guy had a great way of looking out from under the brim of his hat. I used a

telephoto to reach in and capture that." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



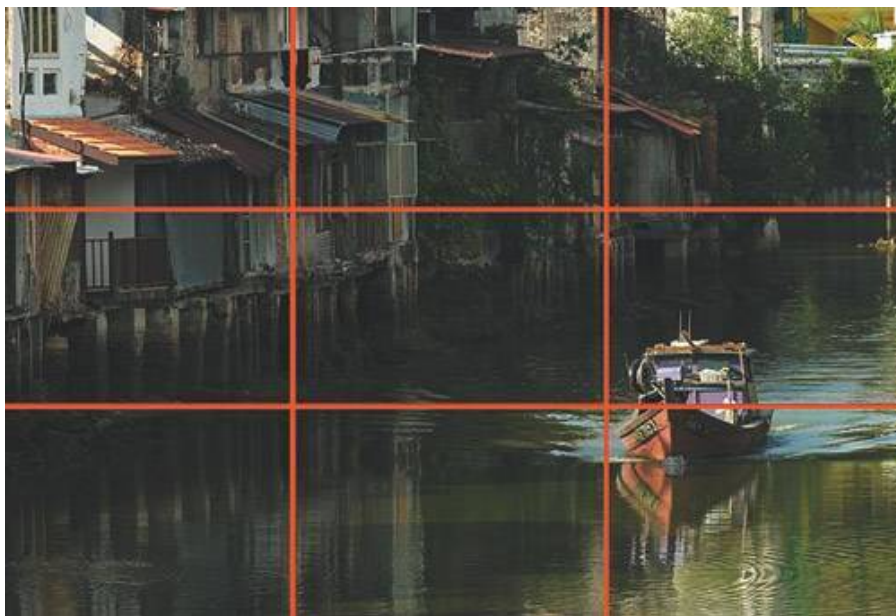
Improving Composition

One photographic technique to keep in mind is the *rule of thirds*, a simple composition tool that lends itself to making creative pictures.

Too often people plop their subject in the middle of the frame, which works fine when you're looking at someone with your eyes, but frequently results in a terribly dull picture.

The rule of thirds separates an image into nine squares by dividing the area with two horizontal and two vertical lines. The idea is to center your subject on one of those intersecting lines.

Figure 5.13. The Rule of Thirds is more of a guideline than a rule, but it works well for people trying to learn new ways to compose. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

A tip from art school: An image is often more compelling if the subject touches two sides of the frame. This is an extension to the rule of thirds.

Figure 5.14. The LCDs of some cameras, like that of the Nikon Coolpix seen here, display an overlay of grid of lines to help you with framing. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Some cameras have a rule-of-thirds composition mode that overlays this grid ([figure 5.15](#)) on the LCD. This helps with composition and is also a good way to make sure your camera is level when you're photographing a landscape, a building, or any subject with horizontal or vertical lines.

Figure 5.15. "I wanted to keep the focus on the flowers in this market," Hoffmann says, "yet retain the market feel. Using a wide-angle lens at f/4.0, and getting right on top of the flowers, let me do that while keeping the background elements soft, so they don't distract from the scene." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Experimenting with Lenses

If a subject seems dull through the viewfinder, it needs an alternate approach. Using a wide-angle lens when you're shooting portraits, or a telephoto when you're tackling landscapes, might be exactly what's require to give your shot more interest and vitality

Always look for alternate ways to capture a scene. Everyone goes to

France and takes essentially the same photo of the Eiffel Tower trying to make it look like a postcard. Instead, always be on the lookout for new perspective or a new approach to liven up a stale treatment.

Preventing Rain from Washing Away Your Photos

Coping with bad weather comes with the territory when you're a travel photographer. The way to make the best of a rainy day, or a snowy one, is to plan ahead. When it comes right down to it, pictorially speaking, there isn't any such thing as lousy weather. Certain weather has distinct photographic advantages and possibilities. Cloudy days have fewer problems with contrast caused by bright light and dark scenes in your photo, which is something most cameras don't handle well. Rainy or wet weather makes colors more saturated and makes the roads look clean.

Keep in mind that world-renowned photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson was most famous for a photograph he took of a man jumping over a puddle.

Figure 5.16. If rain's a part of your trip, then make it part of the story of your trip. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.17. When it's raining, learn to relax, like Rolf Gestalter of Bremerton, Washington, did while on a photo trip to Costa Rica. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.18. This pretty shot of boats on a beach wouldn't have been possible on a bright, sunny day. Sometimes the soft light works to your advantage. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Dress for Success, Safety, and Health

The first rule of inclement-weather photography is always the same, and it doesn't matter if you're photographing in a monsoon in Asia, the deserts of North Africa, or the frozen tundra of Antarctica wear appropriate clothing.

Take some tips from adventure sports fanatics, and buy good "technical" clothing apparel that has been designed to help maintain core body temperature during strenuous activities, and then dry quickly. If your core the area of your body that contains most of your organs gets too hot or too cold, you can become sick or die. Technical clothing helps to prevent this through smart use of materials.

Technical clothing is usually made of synthetic fabrics, with names like CoolMax and Gore-Tex, that are designed to do things that natural fibers can't, such as pull away moisture and let it evaporate quickly. Shop for travel clothes at an outdoor sporting goods store such as REI, EMS, and other outlets geared for the active enthusiast. As an added bonus, you'll be able to find lots of clothes with pockets and other compartments to store your gear, since outdoorsy types often bring along nearly as many gadgets as photographers do.

Figure 5.19. You have to think about taking care of your gear *and* yourself when working in bad conditions, like these in Fiji. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.20. If your umbrella's working, you're more likely to be a happy photographer. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Keeping You and your Gear Dry

Every photographer has his or her own technique for dealing with inclement weather. It's OK for professional-level camera gear to get a

bit wet, but nothing likes to get soaked.

TIP

A can of compressed air will blow raindrops off of your lens without leaving smudges, but remember you can't take compressed canisters on the plane with you; you'll have to buy them locally.

If your packing went according to plan, you've got some rain gear, a few plastic bags, Ziploc bags, and a pack towel in your suitcase. If you missed a few items, this would be a good time to head to the local grocery store for a box of garbage bags. Three holes is all it takes to turn a garbage bag into a poncho; a superb hooded poncho can be fashioned from a few garbage bags and duct tape.

TIP

A disposable diaper makes a wonderful water-absorbing tool, great for soaking up huge amounts of water. You might get funny looks using one on your camera gear, but you'll prevent a costly repair bill.

Some photographers swear by umbrellas (especially the large "golf" ones, but I find those to be a too big and unwieldy if you don't have an assistant). The more MacGuyver-ish photographers even concoct ways to attach umbrellas to tripods for hands-free, dry-as-a-bone photography.

Figure 5.21. A little thought and some time in the workshop turned this old flash bracket into a handy way to

mount an umbrella to a monopod. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

To protect your gear from dust, sand, and wet, use freezer-weight Ziploc plastic bags. One trick is to take a two-gallon bag and cut a hole in the bottom just large enough to get the front of a lens through, then tape the bag to the barrel to hold it in place. Reach into the bag's opening to use the gear or zip it closed when not using.

Camera bags like Lowe Pro's AW series are excellent for weather protection because they come with built-in rain covers.

Figure 5.22. A little ingenuity can go a long way when it's raining. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



NOTE

Some point-and-shoots and SLRs can be placed inside

waterproof camera housings developed for scuba divers. While I've never used one under water, I've found them great for high-moisture environments such as downpours and on kayaking trips. SLR-sized cases usually cost a fortune, so I stick with ones for my compact travel cameras.

Shooting in Cold Weather

Cold weather presents its own set of challenges. Rain turns to snow, and water turns to ice. Cold weather can hurt your performance, and I'm not talking about your ability to go on a long walk; batteries don't do well when they get cold. When the temperature drops, it affects the chemical reaction inside your batteries; consequently, they run out of juice when you need them the most.

Most pros keep a few extra battery packs at all times. In the cold weather we keep them stashed inside our jackets, close to our bodies' natural furnace. As a battery pack dies from the cold, we swap it with one tucked in a warm inner pocket and keep shooting. The good news: When you put the cold battery into a warm pocket it slowly comes back to life, allowing you to keep shooting with that one, usually by the time the replacement battery conks out.

Another issue that plagues cold-weather photographers is condensation. When a warm camera is brought to the cold, the moisture on the lens and body begins to condense, forming dew-like layers of moisture on your lens and viewfinder.

Figure 5.23. Dressing for the cold and using large battery packs, like this one by Digital Camera Battery, lets you concentrate on making photos, not staying warm and trying to keep your gear working. (Photo by Dick Whipple)



WARNING

Never, and I mean never ever try to warm up a battery by putting it in something like an oven or on top of a radiator. The battery will explode.

Several companies, notably Quantum Instruments (www.qtm.com) and Digital Camera Battery (www.digitalcamerabattery.com), make external battery

packs that you can wear under your cold-weather gear, and that tether to the camera via a cable. With this solution, it's possible to shoot nearly all day in the cold.

The only effective solution is to leave the camera gear outside long enough for the temperature to equalize, but that often means overnight. If you don't have a rental car with a trunk (in a place where your gear won't get stolen) or some other way to safely store the camera outside, your only choice is to continually wipe the condensation off the camera. And then you're back to the baby diapers.

Figure 5.24. Many beautiful photos can be made in cold, foggy weather, like this atop Grouse Mountain in Vancouver, BC, Canada. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Nothing makes me grumpier than the aggravating cycle of continually donning and removing my gloves so I can take photos in the cold without my fingers falling off from frostbite. Luckily, I spend a lot of time in camping and hiking stores, and I've picked up a few pairs of gloves over the years with fold-down finger flaps that are secured by Velcro. These gloves, and mittens, have fingertips that flip out of the way, allowing me to tweak all the tiny buttons on my camera while exposing my fingers to the elements for the shortest time possible.

Working in the Heat

Hot weather can wreak havoc with sensitive electronics, and with your body too. If you're photographing in a hot location, be sure to keep all of your photographic gear out of the sun.

Remember that the interior of a car in the summer can reach temperatures well over 100 degrees, high enough to cause your electronics to fail, and sometimes high enough to melt plastics. And the LCD screen on the back of your camera that displays the photos doesn't like the heat, either. You'll know your gear is getting hot when the displays start to conk out or become unresponsive.

**Figure 5.25. The desert can be a great place to make pictures, but avoid overheating yourself or your gear.
(Photo by Reed Hoffmann)**



TIP

The best way to prevent camera heatstroke is to keep your gear out of direct sunlight and out of hot, confined spaces. Fortunately, the risks of high temperatures are less severe now that people shoot with digital cameras; film hates the heat. I vividly remember a photo shoot in the Nevada desert where I drove around with a cooler full of ice, and my camera bag in a Ziploc bag inside the cooler, to prevent ruining my images.

Figure 5.26. Hot weather can lead to good sunsets, like this one seen from a port city in Malaysia. (Photo by Reed



Figure 5.27. There's nothing wrong with taking a break to sit in the shade. Who knows, you might even get a picture out of it. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Advanced Photographic Challenges

If you have the basic composition skills, there are certain subjects that are hard to photograph poorly. But there are also many tough-to-shoot subjects, such as sunsets, landscapes, and environmental portraits. The following sections discuss some of the tools, techniques, and approaches that will help you handle the more challenging photographic subjects.

Figure 5.28. Reed Hoffmann: "To get this sunset over Badlands exposed properly, I underexposed what the meter told me and used the LCD on the back of the digital camera to get it just right." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Shooting the Sun

Sunrises and sunsets have their place in the pantheon of photography; their presence in a picture evokes both emotion and the passage of time. The problem with photographing the sun, however, is that it's extraordinarily bright.

The *light meter* inside your camera functions as a thermometer that measures brightness instead of heat. When you point your camera at a subject the light meter evaluates the brightness and darkness of the photo you're about to take and sets the camera's shutter speed and f-stop accordingly.

The problem is that most light meters are sensitive to very large areas of brightness, such as the sun. When a large portion of the viewfinder is filled with a bright area or object, the meter sets the exposure as if the *entire image* were bright. Anything less bright will appear to be a silhouette.

TIP

Generally speaking, the more expensive your camera, the more accurate your light meter will be. This is a key point because automatic exposure settings depend on the accuracy of the light meter. Expensive professional cameras split the incoming light into different areas and evaluate each area individually, which prevents something like a bright sun in one corner of your picture from ruining the overall exposure of your photo.

Figure 5.29. Many of today's cameras offer various metering options that are well worth taking the time to explore. Even some of the compact cameras offer options such as this one with its center button that enables

several ways of metering for your photo. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Most meters focus on the center of the frame. Consequently, if you want to take a photograph in which the foreground is properly exposed and the sun appears as a bright spot in the sky, first point your camera at something that is *not* the sun or illuminated by intense sunlight, and press your shutter release half-way down. Then, *without letting go of the shutter release*, reframe your shot to include the sun, and press the shutter release all the way down. This will force the camera's light meter to measure the nonbright area of the image and set the shutter speed and f-stop based on that meter reading resulting in proper exposure of the darker foreground area. This technique works well for any shot in which one area of your image is much brighter than another, and you want to ensure proper exposure of the darker area.

Figure 5.30a. This is how the meter in the camera read the scene at Yosemite Falls. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.30b. Forcing the camera to underexpose a full stop darkened the surrounding trees and let the clouds and water stand out. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Water World

At least 70 percent of the earth is covered by water, so it's no wonder that water often ends up in photographs. Water, as well as glass, chrome, and other shiny surfaces, reflects light coming toward it. A tool called a circular polarizer is a filter that can be attached to the front of a camera lens to modify the way light enters the lens. If you turn it *just so* it will eliminate the reflection, allowing you, for example, to photograph water without a mirror image of the clouds and sky above.

Figure 5.31a. This picture was shot without a polarizing filter. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Some photographers insist on using circular polarizers any time a body of water pops into the frame, but that seems too dogmatic to me. Like any tool, a polarizer is best used sparingly and when called for.

TIP

Circular polarizers work well with other reflective surfaces too, allowing you to photograph through a window instead of just capturing a shot of yourself in front of the window. They're also good for skies because they can be used to increase the contrast between sky and clouds.

Figure 5.31b. The same picture shot with a polarizer. The sky looks darker and the light brown stems stand out more dramatically against it. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.32a. Polarizers can also be used to reduce glare and reflections. In this photo, no polarizer was used, and

the reflections are obvious. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.32b. With a polarizer filter attached, the reflection is gone. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



NOTE

Water is the archenemy of most electronic equipment, doubly so with salt water. With the exception of some water-resistant cameras, water should be kept away from your photographic gear. Use clean, dry cloths to wipe down your gear if it gets exposed to salt water, followed with a wipe-down from a slightly damp cloth (water only) and then another dry rub.

Remember to treat water like a subject; positioned properly it can define an image, but if it takes up too much of the frame it can drown out everything else.

TIP

Waterfalls are a special subset of water photographs. Shoot them, or any moving water, at a slow shutter speed with your camera on a tripod; the result is a dreamy scene with magically flowing water.

Figure 5.33. Slow shutter speeds can create the feeling of motion, like this shot of a stream at 1/15 second. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Shooting with a Long Exposure Time

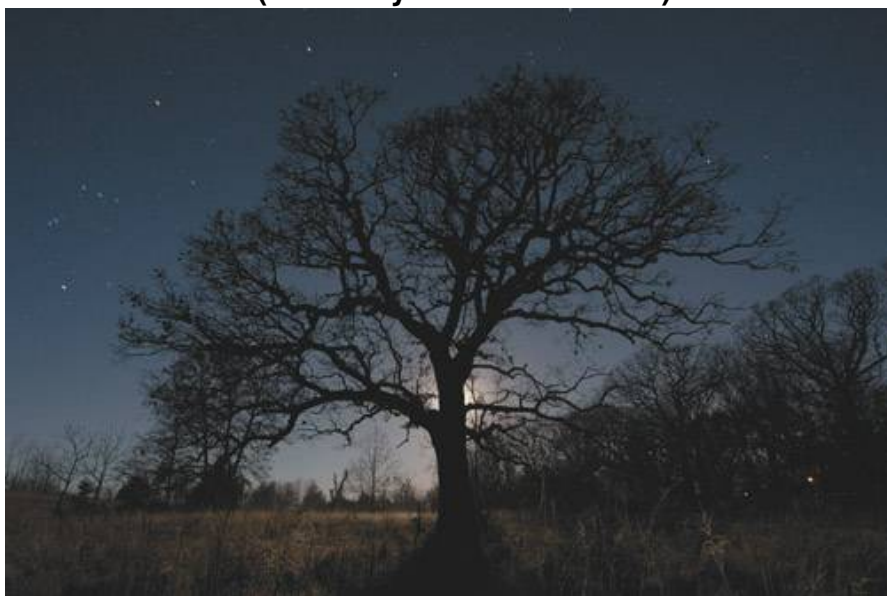
There are many subjects from waterfalls to fireworks that when photographed with a long exposure can make an interesting picture. However, setting your camera to take a photograph with an exposure longer than a second requires a few tools and techniques.

First, you'll need a solid tripod or other nonmoving surface on which to put the camera. Tripods are best because they can be adjusted to capture your image perfectly, but a sandbag or other object will do.

If your camera offers a remote trigger function, by employing either a cable or a wireless remote, use it. Nothing ruins a long exposure shot like fumbling for the shutter release and shaking the camera.

If your camera doesn't have a remote release, set the self-timer and then keep your hands off the camera until it's taken the picture.

Figure 5.34. This 66-second exposure was done on a tripod in the middle of the night during the Leonid Meteor shower, in Missouri. The meteors didn't show up, but the moon silhouetted against the tree still made a nice photo.
(Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



The Sporting Life

The running of the bulls in Pamplona, the Tour de France finish line in Paris, the Olympics—some sporting events are worth a trip in and of themselves, and they're perfect opportunities for sports photography.

One of the best things about photographing sports is that so much is happening. Team sports have jerseys with vivid colors, there is often fast action, and there's usually plenty of lighting available—few sports are played in the dark.

The most common mistake in sports photography is improper shooting distance. Most of the great sports shots are up close and personal. When you watch a game on television, glance at the sidelines now and then. When a ball goes out of bounds, you'll notice a group of people who scurry out of the way of the action, cameras in hand. These sports journalists have access to the field, and photograph with long telephoto lenses. They're also down on the field because sports photography shot from a bird's-eye view is rarely interesting. Try to do the same. Bring your telephoto lens to a sporting event, and get as close to the action as you can.

That's not to say that a good wide-angle lens won't bring home the bacon. Some wide shots, especially in events such as marathons with numerous competitors, can really be brought to life with a wide-angle lens.

When shooting fast-moving sports, you can choose whether you want a blurred image or freeze-frame by how you adjust the settings on your camera. Many people shoot sports with a fast shutter speed, freezing the image in place, but the resulting picture can feel static and devoid of action. A freeze-frame shot works perfectly for a basketball slam dunk or the moment when one of the Pamplona bulls tosses someone into the crowd. But it doesn't work as well for car racing.

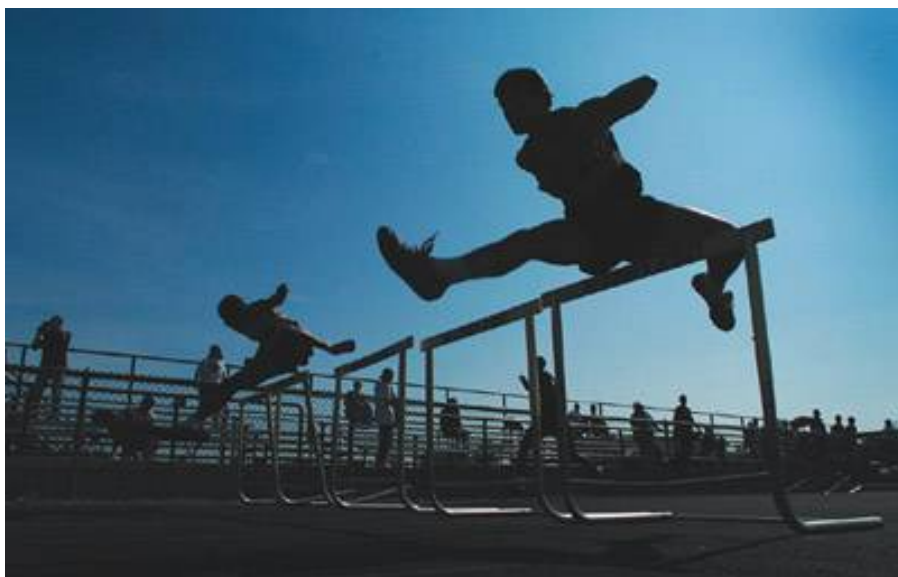
Blurry shots convey motion, but if there's nothing *but* blur the photograph loses all meaning and becomes abstract. It's a great idea to make sure that *something* in a photograph is in focus, and that

should be the athlete's face or the object that's the center of attention.

Figure 5.35. A telephoto lens and good autofocus system will help you get more worthwhile sports photos. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.36. Wide-angle lenses can also be used effectively with sports, but always look for a unique perspective. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Pan your camera move it horizontally when taking a photo to create background blur while keeping the subject in focus. For a good pan, simply set the camera to a slow shutter speed, point the camera directly at the moving subject and turn your body to track the action while you press the shutter release. Moving the camera will blur the background, but if you can keep the center of your viewfinder on the moving subject, the subject will be sharp.

Figure 5.37. Panning means shooting at a slow shutter speed while following the subject with your camera. If you get it right, you should have some sharpness in the subject, with the rest of the scene a blur. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



NOTE

Be very safety conscious if you're going to participate in the sport you're photographing. If you want to shoot rock climbers, take courses at your local climbing gym, for example. Don't get in the way of the athletes or you can hurt them, or yourselves.

Figure 5.38. When shooting on vertical surfaces whether rock, ice, or a building make safety your priority, and always safety-tie your cameras and lenses. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Making Panoramas

In the days when film ruled the earth, panoramic cameras were either bulky medium-format devices or systems that used multiple frames of 35mm film to produce a single super-wide image.

Today, even most digital point-and-shoots have a panorama mode that enables photographers to shoot multiple frames that they later stitch together using photo software to create a panoramic image. The pictures from these cameras can look strange, since each frame is exposed differently; more expensive cameras try to match up the exposures while the images are being saved to the digital media card.

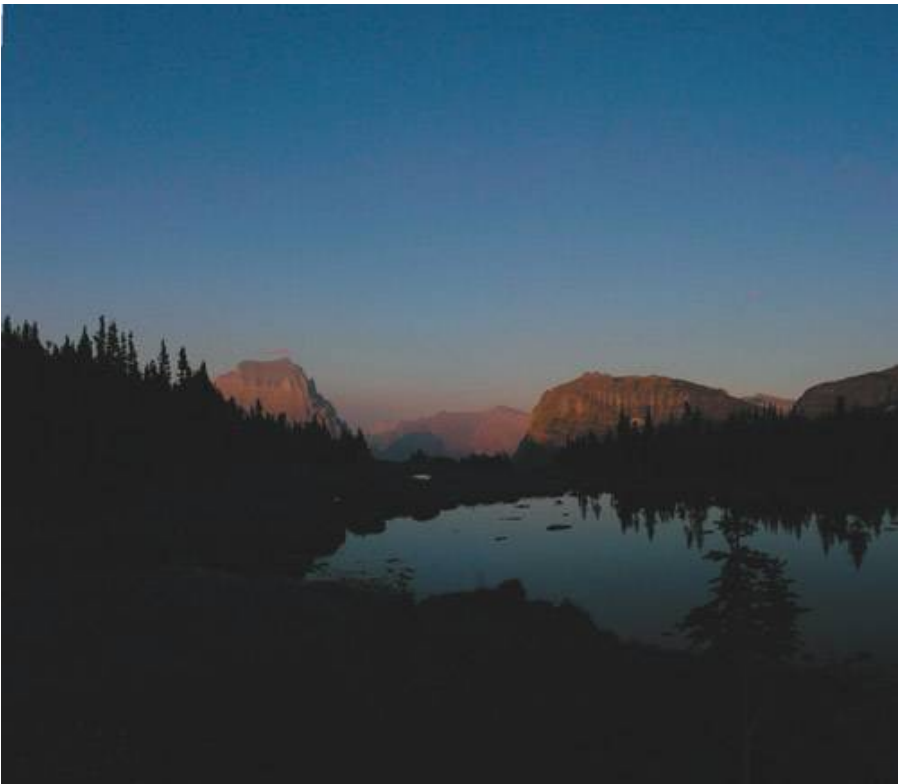
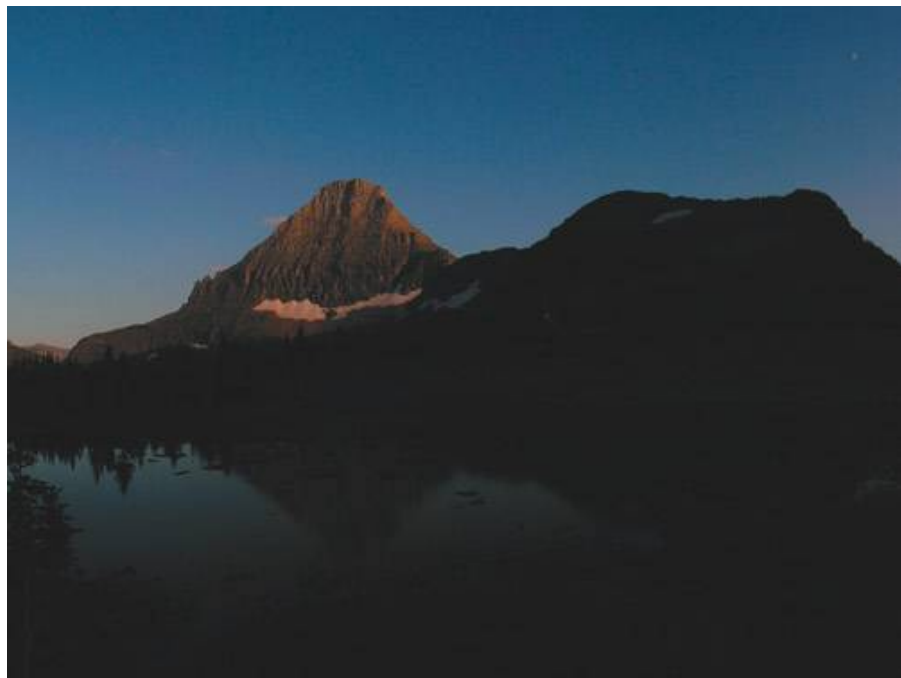


Figure 5.39. This panorama shot at Glacier National Park was stitched together from five frames. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Succeeding at Safari Photography

Many photographers dream of the classic photographic safari, the end-all and be-all of travel photography. But the specialized photographic needs of such an adventure are considerable. When you're spending all day on the veldt trying to get a shot of a hunting predator, you and your gear must be up to the task.

An African safari is very dusty and very, very bumpy. Not only is it uncomfortable when you're on game drives, but also when you're in transit, which can last for hours.

Your safari camera bag should tightly seal against dust and have lots of cushioning for the bumps. Carry a few large, thick, industrial-type garbage bags to slide your camera bag into to minimize its exposure to dust. Don't change lenses in the field or leave your camera body open except in clean, nonwindy places. If possible, have two camera bodies available—keep a wide angle on one and a telephoto on the other.

Figure 5.40. Giraffe and baby sharing a quiet moment together. (Photo by Bill Durrence)



Many people make the mistake of thinking that all they need is a telephoto lens, but often the guide vehicle pulls up close to the animals; they're used to having Land Rovers in their midst. A 70-200 mm lens and a teleconverter is usually all that's needed to shoot on safari, though a 300mm lens can also come in handy.

Forget about using a tripod when you're in the vehicle; it can't be set it up. A monopod (a big stick with a camera screw mount on one end) will work sometimes, but the best bet is a beanbag. Bring a two-gallon

freezer bag and fill it with dried beans when you get there. When you leave, give the beans to the guide.

You should bring along bandannas for covering your mouth, and some items to trade with the locals. Pencils are great (not pens, since you can always sharpen a pencil and when you're out of ink, you're out of ink). Paper and kids' books are also popular.

Remember, on a safari you are wealthy beyond measure to most of the local people. Be kind, respectful, and generous.

Don't forget to bring a power strip and a 220-volt converter. There should be at least one outlet in your tent. If necessary, plug the converter into the wall outlet, plug the power strip into the converter, and plug everything you need to charge into the power strip.

Finally, bring a head-mounted flashlight, like those used by climbers and hikers, for night trips to the bathroom, though you may not be allowed to leave the tent at night, due to the presence of wild animals.

Figure 5.41. While on a safari, don't forget to also acquaint yourself with the local people. (Photo by Bill Durrence)



Photographing Animals

Even if you're not on safari, you're likely to encounter animals during your travels. Animals make terrific subjects and they're often more agreeable to photographic intrusions than people are. It's usually best to photograph them at their eye level (this works well with children too).

Figure 5.42. Not all wild-animal photography has to be done in the wild. This shot of a coyote was taken through a fence at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum outside of Tucson. Careful choice of background and use of a zoom lens makes it look as if it was shot in the wild. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



An animal portrait is best when it shows the animal in its environment, giving a sense of place, experience, and action (**Figure 5.43**). It's one thing to see a photograph of a bull grazing in a field, but another to see him running toward the camera. Naturally, your own safety, and the safety of the animal, should always be your first concern.

Figure 5.43.



TIP

Sun shining between tall buildings produces shafts of light most any time of day that can be visually striking in photographs, while glass structures can function like giant reflectors ([Figure 5.44](#), next page). Watch for the contrast between light and dark, and the dramatic interplay of light, to create powerful images of cities and people.

Figure 5.44. It would be only natural for a visitor to New York City to go home with a photo of Trump Tower, considering the popularity of the TV show "The Apprentice." (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Capturing Cultural Icons

When traveling in foreign countries, you'll be surrounded with icons of culture and heritage. Look for the features that make regions unique—the lochs of Scotland, the canals of Venice, the castles of Spain.

When photographing these locations, pay attention to what's in the background of your picture. Take care to eliminate anything that distracts from the ambiance of the shot. A modern car among windmills in Holland clashes with the old world atmosphere you're trying to capture.

On the other hand, that may be exactly what you're after; a shot of people dressed in traditional ceremonial garb while chatting on cell phones captures a cultural event at the same time it illustrates the changes in that culture's traditions.

Figure 5.45. Power lines and a satellite dish certainly take away from the quaint feel of this old European town.

(Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Shooting Indoors

When traveling, you'll often find yourself photographing inside buildings, frequently under artificial light. The light indoors is both dimmer than outdoors, and it's a different color. Every light source gives off a different tone: Fluorescents are greenish, tungsten light is yellow, and so on. When shooting film, you'd use either an indoor or outdoor film, depending on where you were photographing, or your pictures would end up looking like an old TV with the color adjustment out of whack.

In the digital era, you simply change the white balance of your camera to match the type of light. Check your manual, most cameras use a standard set of symbols to signify the different lighting types.

Figure 5.46. With digital cameras you can change white balance with the flip of a menu item. You can even create a custom white balance for the particular light in which you're shooting. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Bring a tripod if you're going to shoot inside buildings. Lower light levels in most indoor spaces call for a slower shutter speed.

TIP

Many professionals carry high-end lenses, with aperture settings in the f-1.2 to f-1.4 range, specifically for shooting indoors under low light. A lens with a 1.4 f-stop lets in twice as much light as one that's f-2.8. An f-1.4 lens can make all the difference when you're handholding a shot, but want to avoid a blurry image because the amount of light it takes in enables you to use a high, movement-freezing, shutter speed.

Figure 5.47a. This old city street is shot with a daylight white-balance setting. The streetlights make it appear too yellow-orange. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.47b. The image should have been shot with the incandescent white balance setting, giving it this look. In this case, however, the photo was shot in RAW format, allowing the photographer to later make the change to incandescent. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Taking Pictures of People

Photographing people can be nerve-racking to the inexperienced, but it can also be rewarding. Some people have no problem approaching strangers and politely asking to take their photograph; for others it's extremely difficult. (Regardless of the category you're in, *always* ask permission to take someone's picture. Even if you don't speak the language, gesturing to your camera and then to the person while smiling is usually all it takes.)

Figure 5.48. Using a fast lens with a wide aperture keeps the background out of focus so it's not distracting. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Once you've been given permission, your best path to a good picture is to make your subjects comfortable. If you speak the same language,

even a little, ask about their life. Most people will be flattered you asked, and talking with you will put them at ease. Such times often turn into ideas for great photographs. "Did you know," they might ask, "that this house has the oldest flour mill in Ireland?" and off you go to photograph someone using a piece of history.

Always look as if you're comfortable with your camera gear and know what you're doing, even if you don't. No one wants to have their photo taken by someone who is fumbling with buttons and wasting time. Let your subject participate, even if you don't want the photograph they're suggesting; shoot it first and suggest another pose afterward.

The best photographs of people are what I call "environmental portraits" pictures of people doing what they do for a living or for fun, in the environment in which they do it. Begin with a wide-angle lens, and then experiment with portraits and abstracts using a longer focal length lens to isolate parts of the action.

Figure 5.49. A stop in a small mountain town for lunch resulted in a nice photo and a memorable meal. Friendliness goes a long way in opening doors to people's lives. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 5.50. Spending time learning about someone's job may also get you permission to take a few photos. (Photo by Reed



As you shoot, ask questions about what your subjects are doing and let them show their world to you. You're much more likely to get a good shot when someone's passionately involved in work.

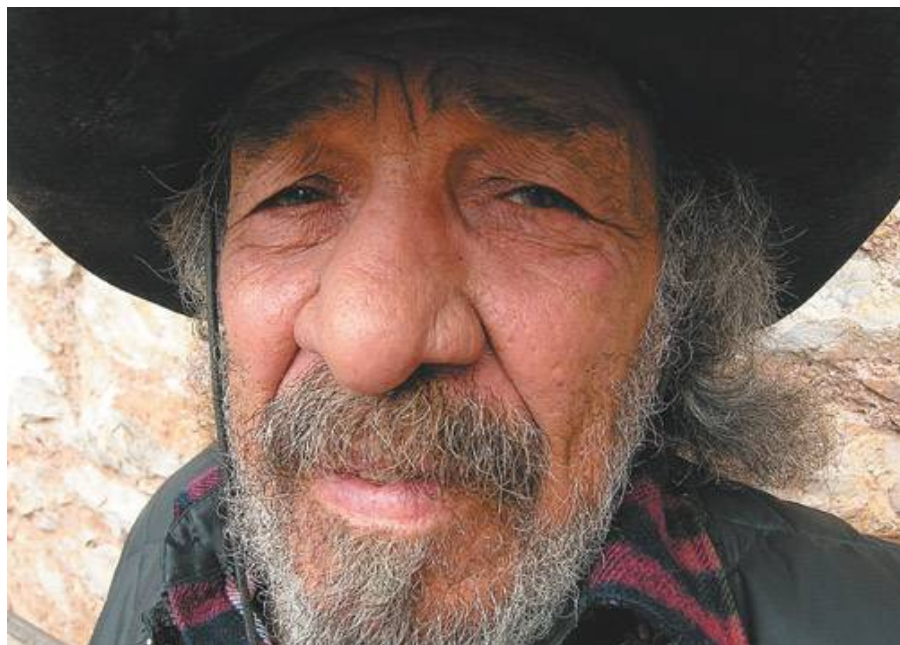
There are no rules about whether your subject looks at the camera or away from it. Experiment, compose a variety of shots, and see what

works. But pay attention: The best photograph often presents itself just as you're putting away your gear, and your subject relaxes.

TIP

Studio photographers may take dozens, or even hundreds, of pictures in an effort to get a subject to relax. During the first few clicks of the shutter, people being photographed are often nervous. As you shoot they become less self-conscious and loosen up. Inevitably, the best shots are made near the end of a shoot.

Figure 5.51. Try a close shot for a change of pace, if your subject is comfortable with it. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



To Pay or Not to Pay?

One of the oldest debates among travel photographers is over the moral and ethical dilemma of paying people to take photographs of them.

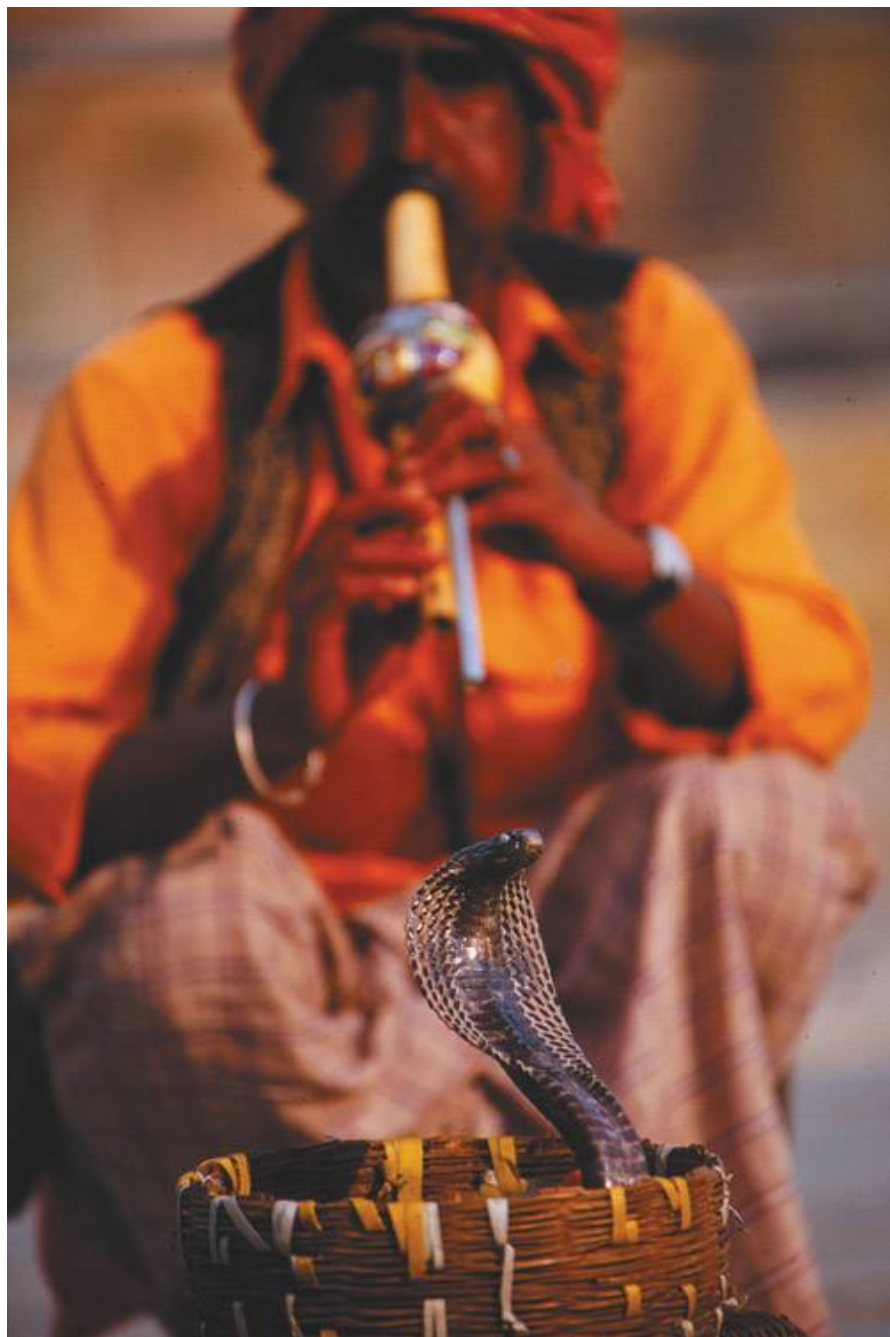
Some professional photographers argue that paying sets a bad precedent. In some remote areas with meager economies, paying for a picture encourages people to shill for tourist groups, making them dependent on outside incomes. It's not uncommon in such places for parents to dress their children in "traditional" garb, and charge tourists to photograph them.

Others say that photography is inherently invasive, and that paying to take a photo of someone, especially in a poor country, is a fair trade for a lasting memory, and the invasion of the person's privacy.

Most people deal with it on a case-by-case basis. But if you have subjects who give generously of their time and their patience, give them something in return. Be courteous and respectful. If you are invited into a home, for example, to photograph the family preparing a meal, it is appropriate and appreciated to bring along food or something for the house.

One more thought: Street performers are not merely interesting photographic subjects, they're out there earning a living. If you want to get them at their best, make a contribution.

Figure 5.52. Snake charmers in India are out there to make their living; paying them a modest fee for photos is more than fair. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

A studio photographer friend once told me that he likes to "fix" something on the clothes of the person he's photographing. He'll remove a stray hair or adjust a collar. This tells his subjects that he's trying to make them look good. It doesn't always work. Some people don't like to be touched, but others find it reassuring and it relaxes them.

With so much to photograph, it's a challenge to keep from shooting *everything* on your trip. You'll be astounded at the opportunities around you if you look. Shapes, colors, motion, activity, and people are everywhere. Keep shooting pictures and keep experimenting for the best travel photography ever.

Figure 5.53. It's a big, beautiful world out there. Keep your eyes and, more importantly, your mind open to the possibilities. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Chapter 6. Managing your Gear, and your Photos, on the Road

Don't forget to shoot pictures of the people you're with, especially any guides you use. This photo of a mountain guide who was helping Reed Hoffmann and his group was taken in the Patagonia region near Bariloche, Argentina. Hoffmann underexposed the scene to get a rich blue sky. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Digital photography has opened up new possibilities for the travel photographer. Eliminating film from the equation has meant lighter travel bags, fewer worries about such hazards as heat or airport x-rays, and greater freedom to adapt to changing photographic conditions.

But while digital photography liberates you from nearly every limitation of film, the digital workflow introduces new logistical hurdles. And while the freedom of digital allows you to shoot more images than ever, now you may return home with thousands of pictures.

You might think that it will be easy to locate that shot of the Buckingham Palace guard sneezing, but when a year has passed and your hard drive is cluttered with countless images, it will be more difficult than you think. What you need is a good, easy system for managing your images. Luckily, professional photographers have come up with simple solutions to the file-management dilemma. Back in your hotel room, you need only a few minutes to take care of a whole day's worth of images.

Step by Step

Digital photography is so *easy* that you can almost forget you need to do anything after taking a picture. In the days of film, your pictures passed through a single system, the photo lab, to get developed. With digital there is no photo lab. The photographer is the one who processes and stores the images. And just as the photo lab technician followed certain steps to turn exposed film into photographs, the digital photographer needs to do a few things to turn the collection of data on a digital storage card into pictures.

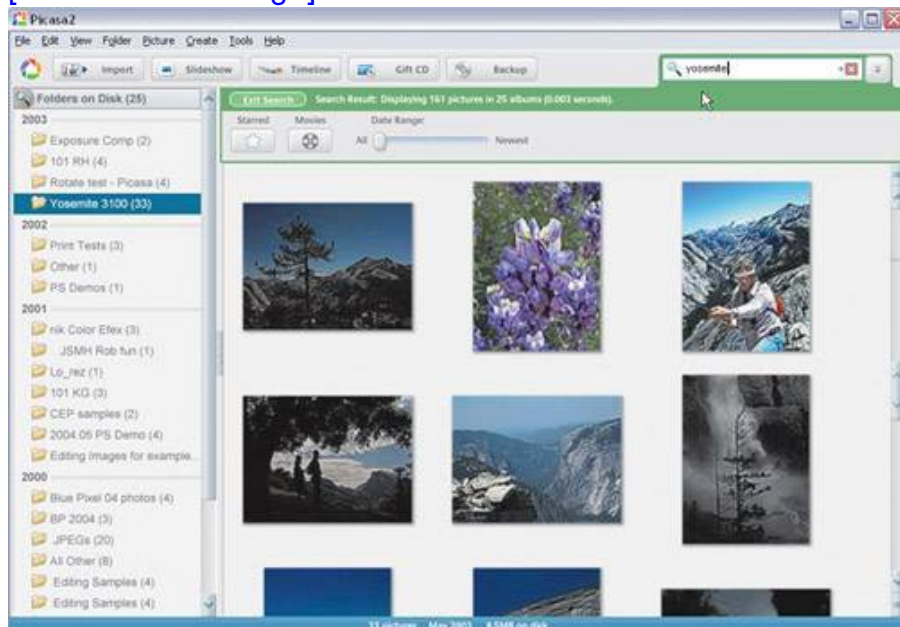
The steps of digital "processing" are simple, and they're always the same. Photos must be *downloaded from your camera into your computer, named, browsed, and archived*. Additionally, with digital photos you have the power to print and share your pictures in a variety of ways (covered in the next chapter) that film could never offer.

Figure 6.1a and 6.1b. Many photographers have traded one type of photo media for digital media that has different requirements. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 6.2. Google's Picasa, one of the most popular free photo browsers, offers many features. These shots were taken in shot in Yosemite National Park. (Photos by Reed Hoffman)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Building Blocks

There are a number of ways to carry out the steps of digital processing. Numerous programs available to help manage your photographs, but pros and consumers generally have different needs. Not every solution is right for every photographer. But remember, the steps are always the same, regardless of what programs you use.

To help you pick your solution, I'll discuss the all-in-one approaches to digital image management, as well as the more advanced a la carte methods most pros use. First, let's turn to the steps of digital photo processing (and why they're important) to help explain why some programs are better suited to different types of users than others.

The Importance of Importing

Downloading your photos from your camera to your computer also known as transferring, importing, or ingesting is the first step in processing your digital photographs. Once you take a picture, you'll need to move it from your camera's media card into your computer. Downloading is a crucial step because you'll need those images on your computer to work with them, and you'll need to erase the card to take more pictures.

NOTE

Chapter One talked about using a personal computer on the road, versus bringing along a portable storage device (sometimes called "digital wallet"). If you're using a storage device, you'll need to connect it to your computer when you get home and ingest the images stored in the device. That's one reason it's good to bring your computer along on a photographic trip; it'll save you a step.

Figure 6.3. You can do your downloading to the computer wherever you happen to be if you're using a laptop, even while camping in the Rockies. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Whichever program you use will copy the images from your card to your computer's hard drive. You might have to specify where they'll go (depending on what software you're using) so it's a good idea to have an organizational structure in mind. That's what *naming* is all about.

TIP

Some programs allow you to erase the media card automatically after you've ingested your photos. This is never a good idea, for two reasons. First, you'll have fewer problems with your media card if you format it using the camera's formatting options. More important, there are rare times when your computer might think that it's transferred

the images correctly, but something happened to corrupt the files. You'll want to be able to re-download them from the card if that happens, something you can't do if they've been erased.

The Name Game

Creating a good *file structure* is the first step in being able to easily *find* your images. The file structure is the way you organize folders and files on your hard drive. You probably already do it with your word processing and email files.

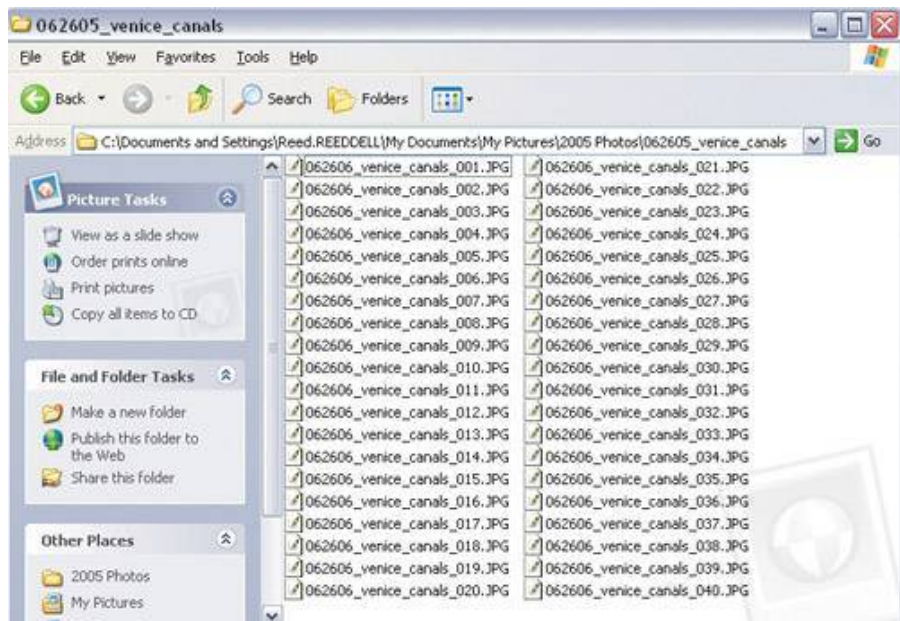
Over time you'll amass a large number of digital images on your computer, so it's important to start with a good naming and organizing system. Most pro photographers use a variation of what I'll call the "date/name system." The idea behind using the date/name system is that you can locate files easily if you remember either when you took the photo, or what you called the shoot.

For example, inside your photos folder (called the Pictures folder by most Mac users and the My Pictures folder on Windows systems) will be a folder for each year, and inside that will be folders for each shoot, labeled with both a date and a name. The files inside that folder should have the same label as the enclosing folder.

For example, say that you shot the canals of Venice on June 26, 2005. A good naming structure would be Pictures>2005>062606_venice_canals. Files inside that should have the same name so they should be 062606_venice_canals_1.jpg, and so on. An example of a poor name would be Pictures>Italy.

Figure 6.4. A good naming system for your files will make them much easier to find in the future.

[\[View full size image\]](#)



By naming your files and folders with both the date and a memorable name for the shoot, it's easier to find them at-a-glance. You don't have to use this exact system. There's nothing wrong with naming the folder Venice_canals_june_26_2005 or any other variation, but it works best if you arrange your files in a method that integrates both the date and name of your shoot.

MEET THE PRESS

Inside every digital photograph there's hidden information. This is the file's *metadata*. When you take a digital picture, the camera automatically records information about all the camera's settings. Hidden inside each picture file is information detailing the shutter speed, f-stop, color mode, the date and time the photo was taken (if you've bothered to set them properly), and more. That information is called EXIF data and it's in almost all every digital photos ever taken.

Figure 6.5. EXIF data is embedded in every digital camera file, and you can view it if you have the right software.

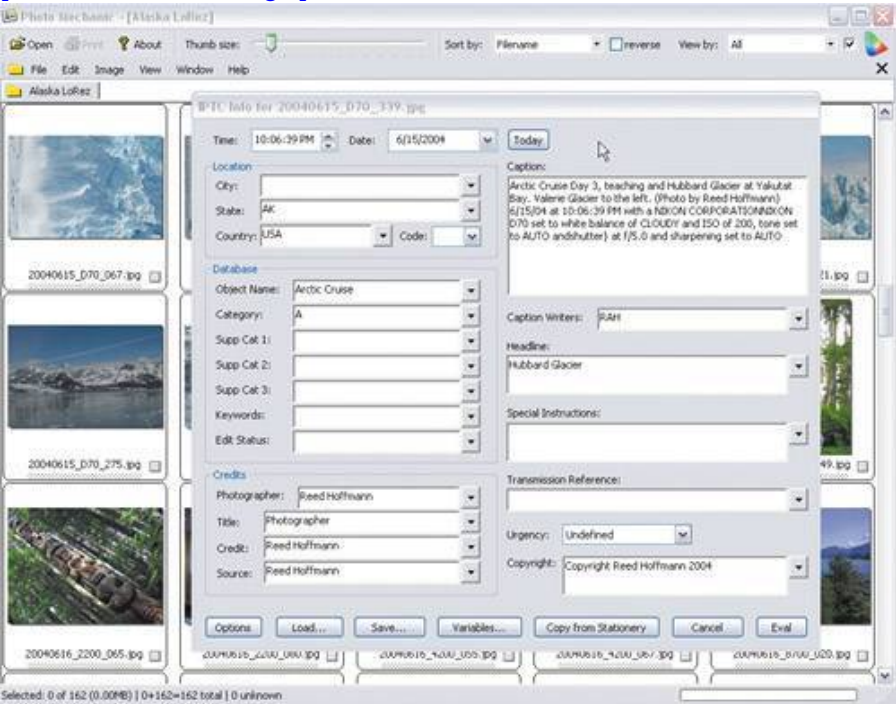


In your photo files is also something called *IPTC data*, information specified by the International Press Telecommunications Council, designed to help newspapers around the world ensure that a photo's copyright information, captions, author credits, and more are correct when sent from news photographers to newspapers.

Most digital photography software lets you access this IPTC data, though the degree to which it can be edited depends on the sophistication of the program. Programs such as iPhoto or Photoshop Album only let you add keywords, while a more sophisticated program like Photo Mechanic enables you to add tons of information to the IPTC fields of your photo files.

Figure 6.6. Photo Mechanic by Camera Bits is one of the more powerful browsers. It gives you the ability to add or change IPTC information. (Photos by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Why is this important? By taking advantage of the IPTC fields, you can find images much more easily. Programs such as Photoshop and Photo Mechanic can look directly inside a file's IPTC data, allowing you to see detailed technical information about a photo. The Macintosh operating system OS X Tiger can even search inside your photos for metadata, meaning, for example, that you could search all the photo files on your hard drive with the word "Venice" in the location field of the IPTC data.

Figure 6.7. Reed Hoffmann: "By doing a search for

'Fallesen,' I was able to quickly find the photos of the Fallesen family we hiked with in the Rockies a few years ago. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



The process of adding information to files is called *captioning*, and although it's an optional step, it's important. Programs like Photo Mechanic allow you to batch-caption and batch-rename images while downloading them, saving time and improving future productivity.

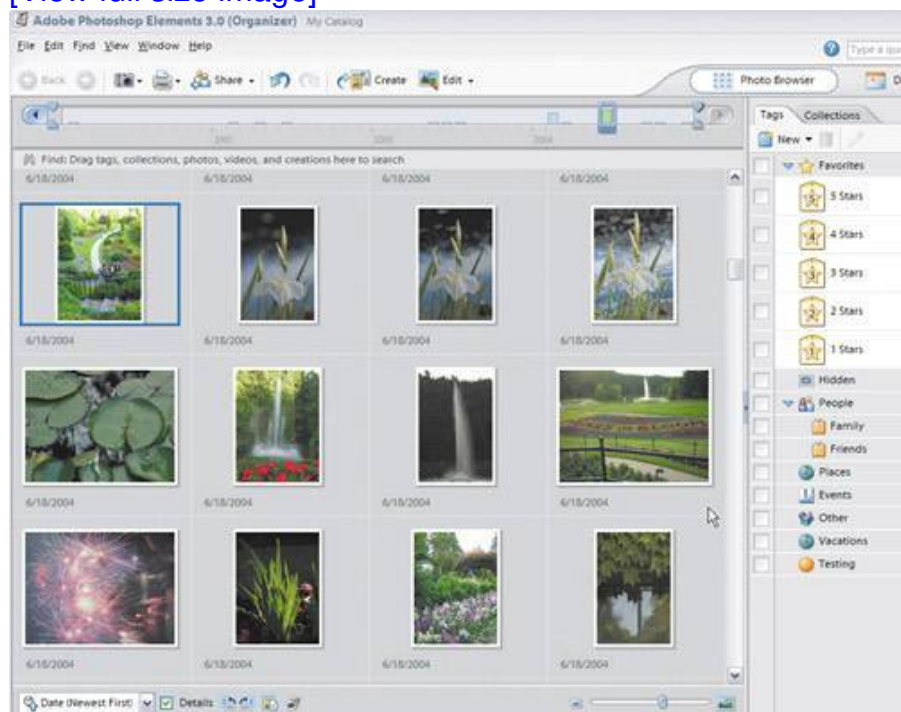
I'm Just Browsing

Perhaps the easiest part of the process is image browsing. Browsing your images is the digital equivalent of flipping through prints or scanning a proof sheet, but with more power. To do so, you'll want a

tool that lets you look at your images individually or as a group of thumbnails; allows you to rate or rank your images (to separate the great shots from the stinkers); and allows you to rename or recaption your images.

Figure 6.8. Many people find Adobe Photoshop Elements' browser, called "the Organizer," to be all that they need.

[\[View full size image\]](#)

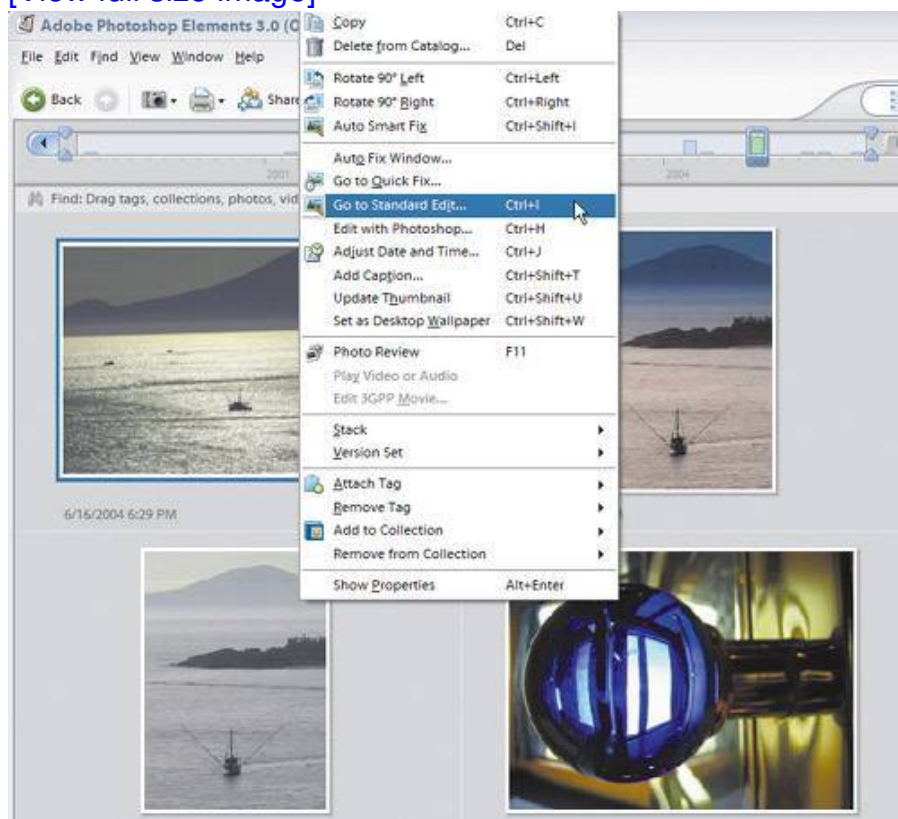


Some programs keep track of all of your photos, which enables you to find them by date groupings or by searching for keywords or captions. Many programs use the browser interface as the gateway to the rest of the program's functions. Find an image in the browser and then click on a button to send it via email, for example.

Nip and Tuck

Figure 6.9. A good organizer, or browser, will let you launch a selected photo directly into the editor of your choice for touch-up work and cropping. (Photos by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



The editing stage is an important part of the workflow process, even if it's just used for red-eye removal, cropping, minor retouching, and color adjustment. Most programs integrate some editing features into the browser, while allowing you to open the image in a more powerful stand-alone photo editing program if you wish.

Shares Well with Others

Sharing your images is an important part of the digital imaging workflow. One of the chief advantages of digital photos over film is the ease with which pictures can be sent around the house, or the world.

We'll cover image sharing in the next chapter, but any good photographic tool will be full of ways to get your photos in front of family and friends no matter where they may be.

Working with a Safety Net

Ask anyone to name the things they'd try to save if their house was on fire and chances are they're going to mention the family photo album. Computers, cameras, and TVs can all be replaced, but photographs are fragile, priceless, and easily destroyed.

At least that was the case with film. Digital photographs can live nearly forever, and they needn't be relegated to a single computer. In fact, the more locations you stash copies of your digital photos, the safer they'll be.

That's why the *backup* stage (also known as archiving) is so important. It safeguards your photos against digital extinction. Any good program will let you make copies of your photo files with a click or two.

You can never, ever have enough backups. One of the reasons that it's such a good idea to bring along your laptop when you travel is that it makes archiving on the road so much easier. You can use its built-in CD or DVD burner to make copies of your files the same day you shoot them, and connect small, portable external hard drives to your computer via the USB 2.0 and FireWire connections.

Figure 6.10. Portable hard drives are small and easy to

take with you. They're available with both USB 2.0 and Firewire connections. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



TIP

Archiving isn't just essential for your photos, it's also crucial for your Word documents, Quicken Files, Excel spreadsheets, audio files, and anything else that's hard or impossible to replace if lost. Some great software programs like Dantz Retrospect will let you easily backup Macs or PCs, while hard drives such as the Maxtor OneTouch and the Mirra Personal Server can back up your entire hard drive either automatically or at the touch of a button.

In addition to photographs that you have stored on your computer's hard drive, you'll want to stash several copies of those photos elsewhere. Ideally, at least one copy should be stored at a location

other than where you keep your computer.

TIP

Got a priceless photograph that you want to archive now? Get yourself a Google GMail account (<http://mail.google.com/mail/help/about.html>). It's a free Web-based email service with an incredible amount of storage space (2 gigabytes at the time this book was written). You can also email yourself photographs, or other files, for safekeeping.

Figure 6.11. A digital camera and a computer open doors to new ways of sharing and storing your photos. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Here's an example of a typical photographic backup system:

- Each image is stored on your hard drive.
- Your main computer hard drive is automatically backed up daily by an external hard drive. This will save your files if something should happen to your computer, like a hard-drive crash or a blown power supply, both of which happen more often than you think.

Figure 6.12. Several large hard drives can store every photo you've ever shot. (Photo by Michael Schwarz)



- You make regular DVD or CD copies of your images, and any other important data, and store them someplace besides your house. This will protect you against catastrophic loss of both the computer and the external drive (think fire, flood, or theft). Take these to a friend's house or put them in a bank safe deposit box or anywhere that'll escape a catastrophe that would destroy your first set of backups.

Figure 6.13. The ease of backing up your photos on CD or DVD makes it a great way to keep your precious memories safer than ever. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



When you're on the road, it's not easy to transfer copies of your CDs to a friend's house, so mail them home instead. If something should happen to your computer and backups while you're traveling, you'll arrive home to an envelope full of images.

TIP

There are a number of small hard drives you can take along to backup your images while you're on the road. When traveling, be sure to put your backup in a different bag than your computer (hard drive in the suitcase, computer in your carry on, for example). This way, if one gets lost, you'll still have the other.

Figure 6.14. It's common to find Internet cafes around the world where you can burn your images to disk, and then mail them home. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

INTERNET
COFFEE 3X



- IRC
- ICQ
- MSN

- SURF
- MAIL
- CHAT
- GAMES

- CD/DVD RECORDING
- DIGITAL CAMERA
- PC/MP3
- PRINTING

Middle Management

Now that we've tackled the main steps involved in managing your digital photographs, let's look at the ways to carry out these steps.

There are two choices: Use a consumer photo software package as an all-in-one solution, or perform different tasks with different programs. The choice is up to you. Each system has pros and cons. We'll look at the different management systems along with their advantages and disadvantages, and then sample workflows under each system.

Figure 6.15. It does no good to have a wonderful photo if you can't find it when you need to. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



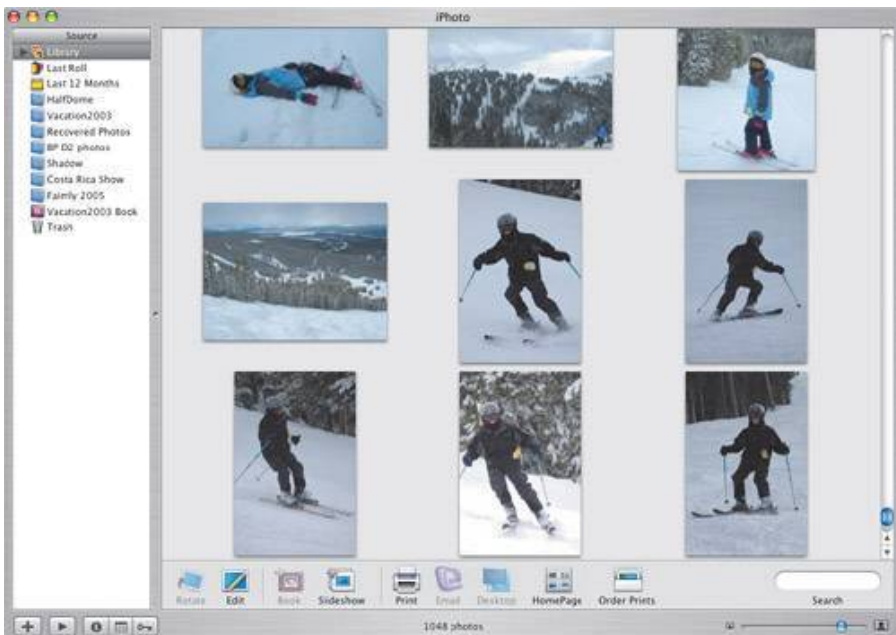
Taking the Easy Way Out

There are a number of one-stop software solutions for image management. Pick one of these tools, and you can skip right along to the end of this chapter ; you'll have a *pretty good* picture management system.

Several companies make programs that act as big photographic organizers. Apple's iPhoto, Adobe's Photoshop Album, Corel's Paint Shop Photo Album, ACDSee, and Google's Picasa are some of the heavy- hitters in the market. These programs allow users to organize and find their photos, print images, order things like books and mugs with photos on them, and create archives.

Figure 6.16. iPhoto is a browser and simple editing package that comes installed on every Mac sold, and has basic cataloging abilities. (Photos by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)

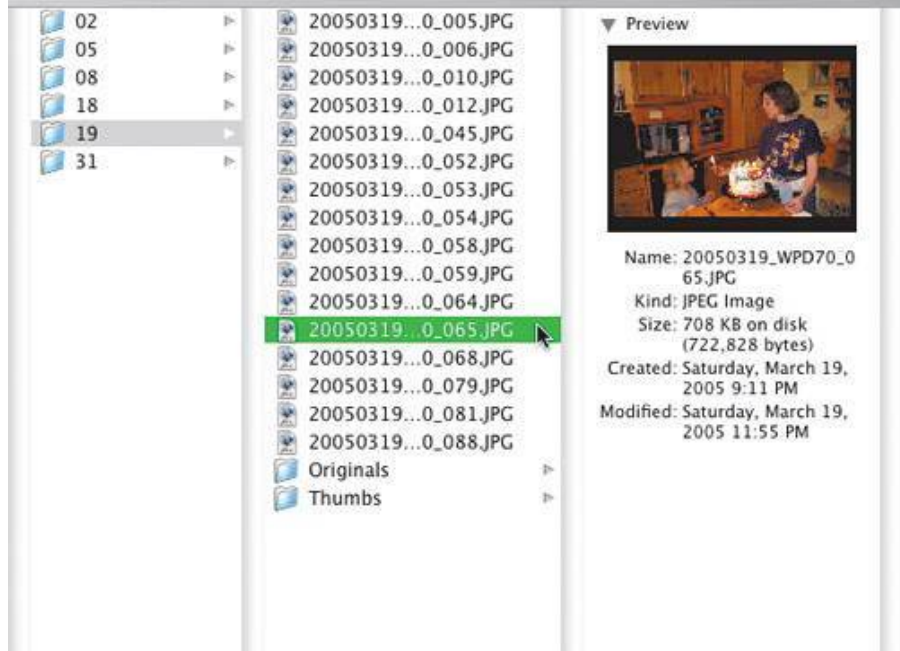


Best of all, these packages are relatively simple to use insert a media card into a card reader (or plug in the camera but you remember that it's faster and less of a battery drain to use a reader, right?). The pictures load into the program, organized by date if you've configured the software to do this. They don't all do it automatically.

So, if these programs can do so much (and at such a low cost; several of them are free), why would anyone use anything else? Why is it that the pros usually avoid these programs?

The chief problem with these photo organizers is that they're *too* simple, taking several important choices out of the hands of the end user. And once you move your photos into these programs, it's hard to get them out again because they become part of a library that's organized on your hard drive in a way that makes sense to the program but might not be clear to the photographer.

Figure 6.17. Many programs, such as iPhoto, have their own system of keeping track of photos, and it isn't always easy to find where they've hidden your pictures. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



The first big problem has to do with the organization of files. These programs are designed to put pictures in a hard-drive folder structure that makes sense to the program, not to the person using it. As a result, your photos can be stored several layers of folders deep, using a cryptic naming system, along with files used for things like displaying slideshows or making archives. Any photos you want to locate in your library have to be accessed via the interface of the program. No poking around in your files to find the picture you took in front of the Pyramids.

This sounds like a great time savings, but really it can slow down a photographer with lots of pictures. Let's say that you traveled to France in May of 2004 and took beautiful shots of the Eiffel Tower. If you've got your files neatly organized on your hard drive, you simply open the folder called something like 052004_Paris_Trip to find your shots. If you used one of the all-in-one packages, those pictures would be impossible to find on your hard drive. Instead you'd need to open the program and hope that you remembered to make a galley of the images. Or you'd have to do a search for all photos taken in May 2004. Want to move your pictures to a newer computer or a larger hard drive? If you don't copy over the folders from an all-in-one program *exactly* the way the program requires, you might have to re-index all your shots.

Another big issue crops up the moment you start to use these programs, during file downloading. Not being designed for the professional photographer, these applications often skip right over the crucial file naming and IPTC captioning step. IPTC captioning is an important way to add data to your photographs, making it easy to find them later. With an all-in-one program, at most you'll only be able to add a trivial bit of metadata, like a keyword. And you probably won't be able to search by important details, such as camera model, timestamp, exposure information, or any of the data in a photo's IPTC or EXIF information.

There aren't many issues with archiving with all-in-one programs, since most give you the ability to burn CDs and DVDs from your photos at the click of a button. What's more, you simply need to copy the program's main folder full of images to an external hard drive to backup the whole thing.

Where these programs *do* really excel though is in their photo-sharing capabilities. These programs usually offer you the option of ordering books, prints, and sometimes things like calendars or mugs, or creating them yourself; allow for the creation of CD and DVD slideshows; and enable you to send pictures via email or publish them to a Web site.

TIP

Many pro photographers keep an all-in-one program in their arsenal just for its photo-sharing capabilities. It's entirely common for a photographer to load a shoot's worth of images into a program like iPhoto or Adobe Photoshop Album just to order a hardcover photo book, or to create a slideshow.

Pick One from Column A

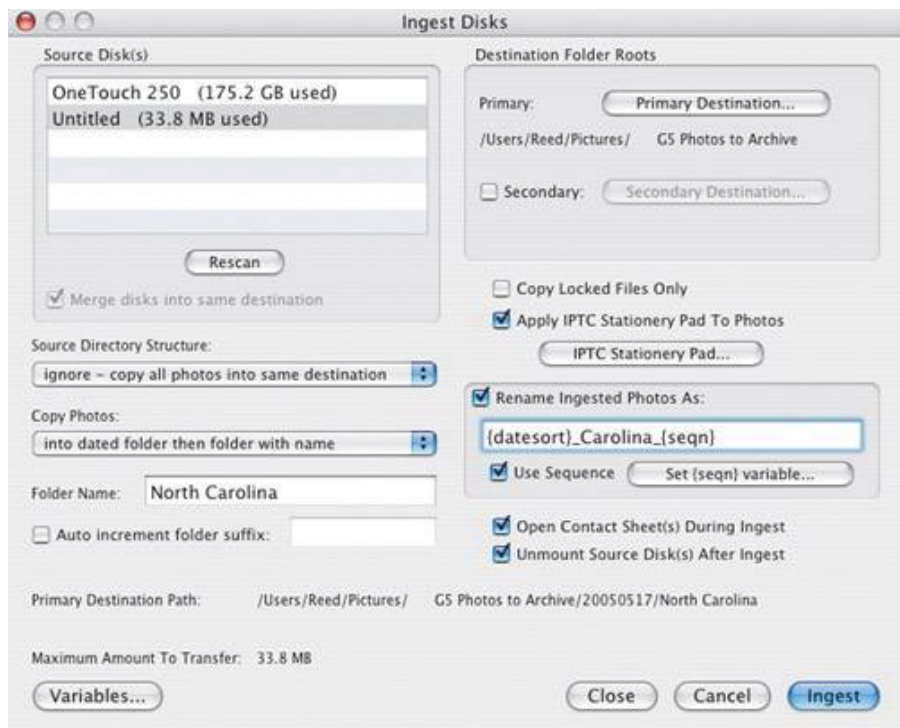
Instead of relying on a single program, professional photographers usually turn- to a handful of specialized tools to get the job done, according to their individual working style.

Often photographers will use a combination of two to four programs to work with their images, each designed to handle one or more tasks with precise functionality.

Some of these programs overlap a bit in the workflow process. For example, Photo Mechanic by Camera Bits provides fantastic downloading tools, is a wonderful caption program, and includes one of the fastest browsers available. It also allows you to have up to 16 contact sheets open at once. Its sharing tools are good, but not great, and it offers limited archiving tools.

Figure 6.18. Photo Mechanic is one of the best tools for downloading and browsing images, but isn't designed as an archiving program.

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Photoshop CS2, the heavy-hitter photo-editing program, has nearly no downloading features, but includes batch renaming, metadata editing, and more through a companion tool called Bridge (which can be slow). Sadly, Photoshop has no archiving or sharing features to speak of.

Finally, image browsing *and* archiving programs like iView Media-Pro and Extensis Portfolio have serviceable downloading features, good browsing and captioning, and very good file-sharing features, but their interfaces are designed for the image-archiving professional, not the casual photographer.

Figure 6.19. Portfolio, by Extensis, is one of the more powerful programs, but that power comes with an extensive, sometimes intimidating interface. (Photos by Reed Hoffmann)

A Typical Situation

Ok, now you're totally confused. You've got two paths for your digital workflow--one that's easy but not the most powerful, and one that's more complicated, but more complete. Which programs are the best?

Figure 6.20. You love the photo you've shot, now what do you do with it? You need a workflow that makes your life simple. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



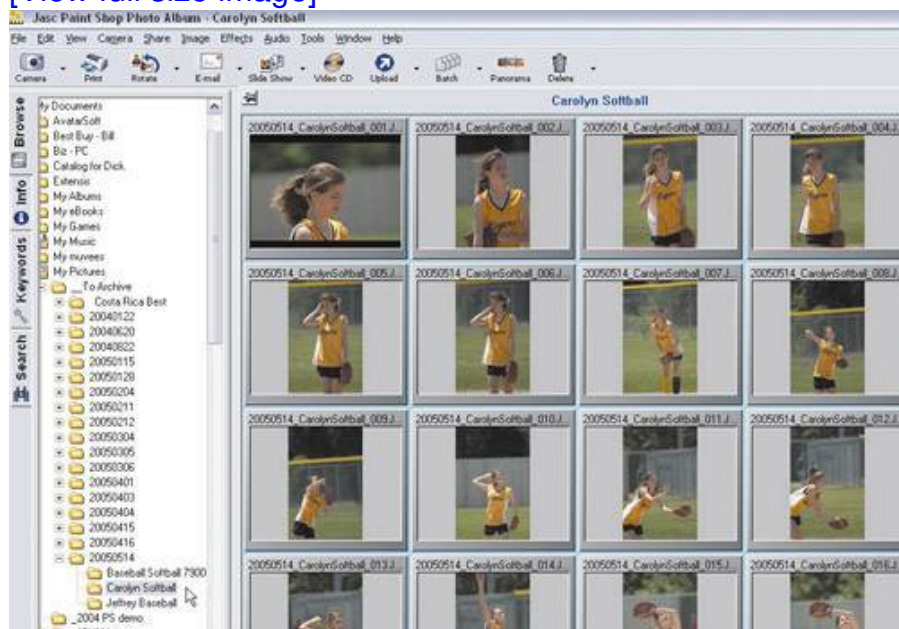
It's a lot easier than it might seem to choose the right path (see the sidebar "[Choices, Choices, Choices](#)" for some software starting points). And remember: You can always change your mind in the future, but if you do you'll either have to import all your photos into an all-in-one program or export them, rearrange, and re-caption them.

Ask yourself, "How involved do I want to be in this process, and how many photos do I shoot?" If you don't shoot a large quantity of photos,

you won't need a powerful workflow. If you prefer to concentrate on the photographic aspects of your travel photography (everything that happens in front of the lens), then the simple solution is best. But if you read this chapter dying to know which program you should use to get the most out of your IPTC captioning, then you're a candidate for the specialized approach.

Figure 6.21. Paint Shop Photo Album is one of the many good all-in-one packages available. (Photos by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Choices, Choices, Choices

If you've decided to go down the one-stop photo package path, look no further than the programs mentioned at the beginning of the chapter: Apple's iPhoto, Adobe's Photoshop Album, Corel's Paint Shop Photo Album, and Google's Picasa, all of which are full of photographic power and picture-sharing goodness. (Apple's iPhoto is Mac-only; Picasa and Paint Shop Photo Album are Windows-only.) If you've got your eye on the more professional approach, start with some of the industry standards. Try out Photo Mechanic for downloading, captioning, and browsing. Give Photoshop CS2 or Photoshop Elements, a scaled-down version of Photoshop, a whirl for your editing needs. (Elements 3 has much of the power of Album built into it). Check out iView MediaPro or Extensis Portfolio as a browser/archiving tool, though Photo Mechanic also handles those tasks well if you don't need commercial-strength image searches.

Both iView and Extensis Portfolio are designed for serious photographers who require true database search capability. Both programs can perform searches across tens-of-thousands of images in a snap, but the learning curve can be steep.

If you're using a Mac, you can't beat the image searching power of OS 10.4 (Tiger) or later. The built-in tool, called Spotlight, can find anything on your computer in a flash. Microsoft's next generation operating system promises to have these searching tools as well but isn't scheduled for release until late 2006.

Figure 6.22. One of the more powerful cataloging applications is iView MediaPro, which makes it easy to search and find your photos. (Photos by Reed Hoffman)

[\[View full size image\]](#)

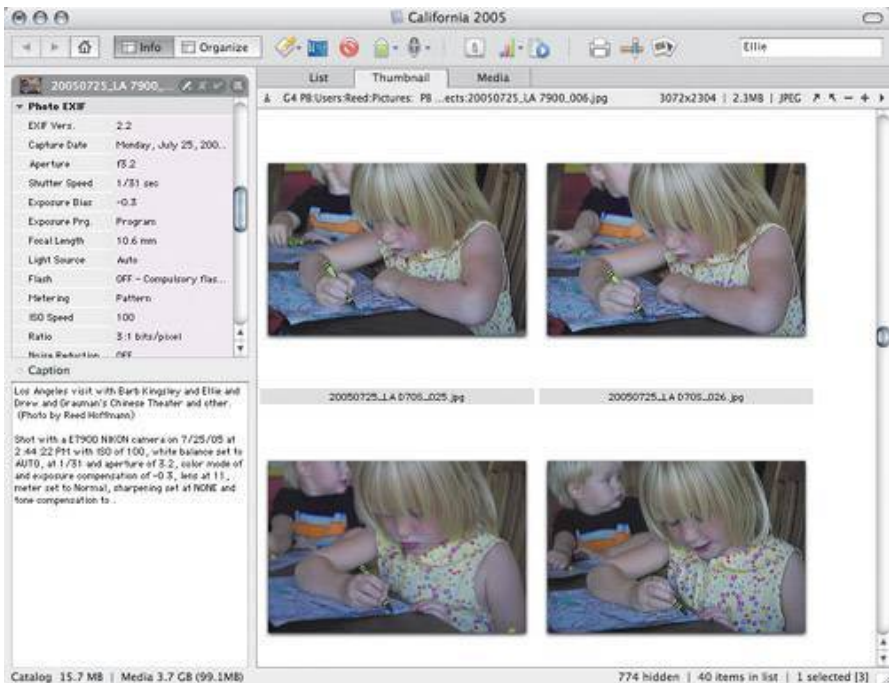


Figure 6.23. No matter what software you decide on, the important thing is to enjoy your trip and come home with memorable photos. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Chapter 7. Sharing your Photos with the World

What good is it to have a beautiful photo like this if you can't share it with anyone? (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



After the hard work of preparing for your photo trip, the fun of photographing new things, and the exhilaration of experiencing new places, it's time to show off your pictures. If you've gotten this far, you already have the tools you need to share your photographs. From physically giving people your photos to posting slide shows online, sharing your photos couldn't be easier. And it's one of the most satisfying parts of digital photography.

Digital photographs are strange because they don't really exist. Every digital photo ever taken is simply a recording of zeros and ones arranged in the same language that all computers speak. Although a digital photo isn't *real*, it starts off the same way as a film photographlight passing through a lens, striking a surface. But the digital image is recorded as a stream of numbers representing the strength of the light and its color at each of the photosensitive pixels across the face of the imaging sensor.

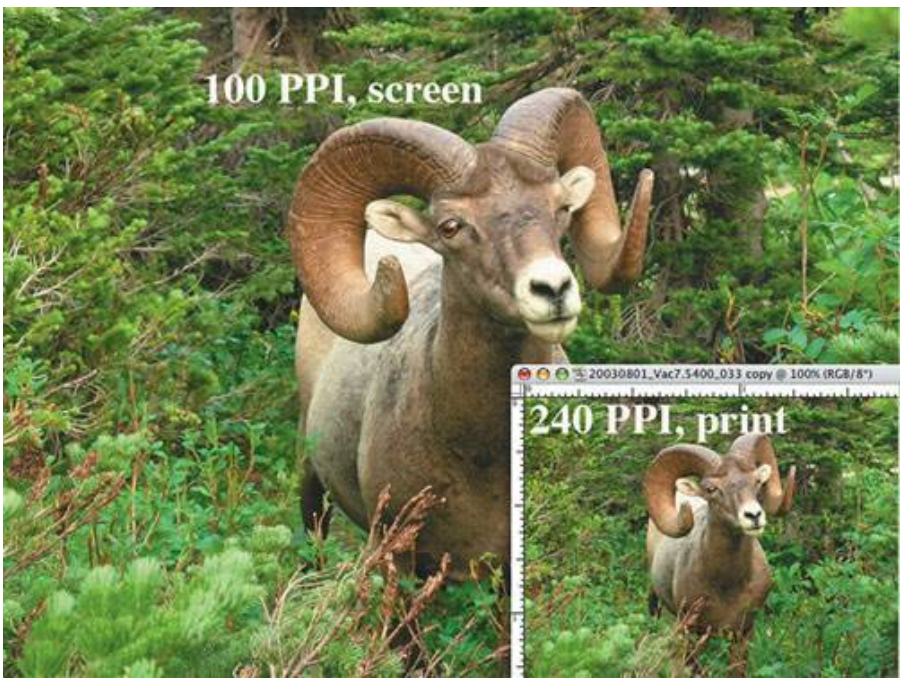
In order to reproduce a film photograph, light is passed through the original negative and projected onto a sheet of light-sensitive photographic paper. The process results in a slight loss of quality due in part to the nature of light, but also to the limitations of the technology.

Digital photography doesn't have as many limitations, so each copy of a digital photograph will be identical to the one before it, with no loss in quality. This makes sharing digital photographs much easier.

There are any number of ways to show off your travel photography that don't involve huddling over the back of a camera peering at tiny images. And unlike the old days of sitting in a darkened room being bored to death by a relative's slide show featuring real slides, modern photo sharing is fun and easy.

Figure 7.1. Because it's made up of pixels, a digital image file can be copied endlessly without degradation. To share it properly, though, learn the difference between what's needed for a good print and a photo attachment you send via email. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Digital photos can be shared physically or virtually. One approach requires a physical print, and the other way requires that you send your files in a format, usually on a CD or as an email attachment that can be viewed without having to make a reproduction. Both have their advantages. Which method you choose has a lot to do with the amount of control you like to have over your work, and how much time you want to spend.

Pixel Pusher

The number on your camera that indicates the sensor size in megapixels doesn't just indicate the resolution of the photos it takes, it also gives you an idea of what you can do with the photos that come from that camera.

Across the face of the imaging sensor in your camera are light-sensitive spots called pixels. Each one of them records how much light strikes it, and combined they make up an image. A camera sensor with 1000 pixels across and 1000 down is a one-million sensor. Cameras with such a sensor are known as one-megapixel cameras. In order to display that image on a computer screen, each dot needs to be represented on your monitor. Inside a CRT monitor is a little light-emitting "gun" that paints the picture pixel by pixel on a surface that glows when struck by light. (An LCD monitor employs different technology, but the idea of painting the image a pixel at a time is the same.)

The average monitor can paint about 100 pixels in every inch of screen space. Divide the 1000-pixel resolution of the camera by 100 and you'll get an image that's approximately ten inches wide when displayed on a screen.

The average inkjet printer has big bold letters on its box saying that it can print at 1440, 2880, or 5760 dpi, depending on the model. In order to figure out how big your image would look on a monitor, we divided the resolution of the camera by the resolution of the monitor. That works for your computer display, but printers are a bit more complicated than that.

All computer printers have both an *input* and *output* resolution. The output resolution is that number printed on the box—1440, 2880, 5760, and it's how many dots of ink are laid out in an inch of space. If you're printing at 1440 dpi and you've got a four-inch-wide photo, your printer will produce that by laying down a line of dots with 1440 individual droplets of ink every inch. In your four-inch-wide printer, the result will be 5760 dots across since $1440 \times 4 = 5760$.

You'd think that in order to produce a beautiful picture at its best resolution, your printer would need to have a document that was 1440 dpi, but it really only needs to have a certain number of pixels to work with—between 160 and 260 pixels per inch. That's enough for it to create a stunning photo simply by looking at the incoming picture and resampling it to its best resolution. Say that your printer creates its best images with photos set to at least 240 ppi, if you divide 1000 by

240, you'll see that the same image that was ten inches wide on the screen would come out to be about four inches wide when printed on a color-photo printer.

As long as you don't want to make a print larger than four inches, your printed images should look great coming from that two-megapixel camera. But if you try to enlarge your image and print an 8x10, you'll notice that the output looks lousy. That's because when you enlarge a digital image, your computer moves each recorded pixel farther away, and then fills in the space between each pixel with guesses as to what would be there if you'd used a higher resolution camera. The result is a photo with jaggy lines and color problems.

A camera with a higher megapixel resolution can produce a larger print than one with a lower resolution, without needing to resize it. Even if you never plan to print something larger than 4x6, you should still keep your camera's resolution in mind. If you want to print just an area of your photograph what is called a crop you'll need enough pixels in your image so that you'll have the right amount left over when you crop out the rest of the photo.

Do-It-Yourself

The personal inkjet printer was the most important development in digital photography. You could argue that the digital camera itself was more important, but for most people a digital camera doesn't change how they capture photographs; it just makes the process easier.

Affordable inkjet printers freed photographers from the chains of the one-hour photo lab, enabling them to save money by printing only the photos they wanted, at the size they wanted, when they wanted.

Figure 7.2. Today's high-quality photo inkjet printers allow photographers to do their own printing. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

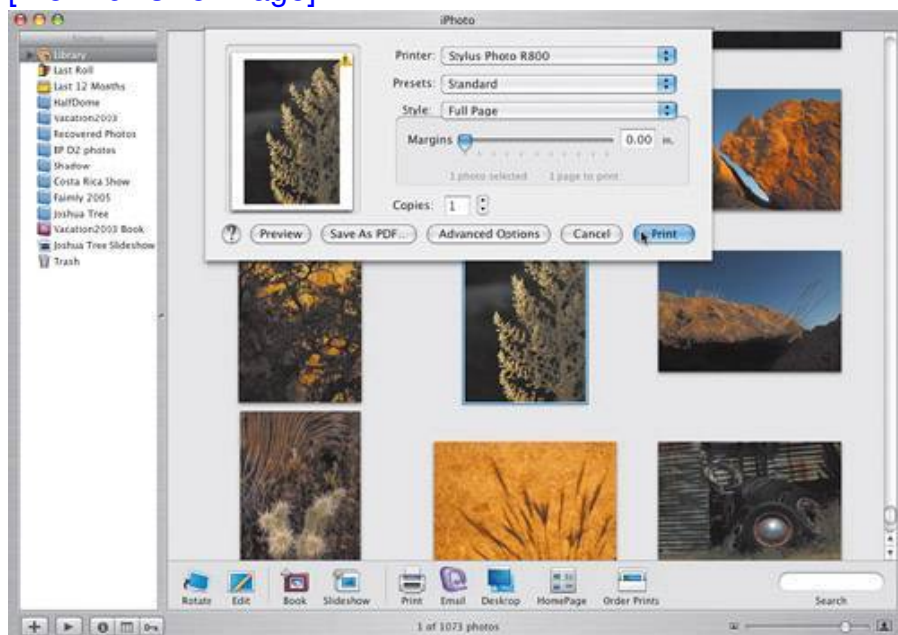


Every all-in-one photo software package on the market enables easy printing of photographs by clicking a button. All you have to do with most programs is click on the photograph you want to print, and click

the print button. Many of the programs, including Apple's iPhoto, will let you print your images at different sizes and will even print multiple images on the same page, or create the digital equivalent of contact sheets of your photos. (This can help you decide which pictures you want to print at larger sizes.)

Figure 7.3. Like most all-in-one programs, Apple's iPhoto gives you the tools to print without leaving the application. (Photos by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



All of the photo-editing programs (such as Photoshop and Photoshop Elements, Corel Paint Shop Pro, Microsoft Digital Image Pro, and so on) will allow you to print your own photos. Because you'll likely have to resize the photograph first, the all-in-one packages are easier for the casual computer user, though even some pro photographers occasionally turn to the all-in-one programs for printing.

Regardless of the program you use to print, keep in mind that you'll want to look for a printer that has the word "photo" somewhere in its

name and has at least six inks. Many of the least expensive color inkjet printers are designed to do text and the occasional graphic, but they're not designed to print beautiful photographs. That's the reason for the photo printer's extra ink—they give it the ability to make true photo-quality prints. High-end professional printers often cost upwards of \$800, but a great consumer photo printer can be had for as little as \$100. Epson, Hewlett-Packard, and Canon make the most widely sold printers, and they all have models in each price category. Since printer technology is constantly improving, you'll want to look for printers advertised as being great for photography. Models that tout both the speed of their black output or the crispness of the text they produce are aimed at a more office-like environment.

And your choice of paper is just as important as your printer. Each of those little tiny dots sprayed out by your printer has to land somewhere, and the better the surface it lands on, the better your image will look. Cheap paper lets the little droplets of ink spread out and blur, while a "photo" paper is designed to keep that dot right where it is, without blurring or smudging. Most printer manufacturers recommend sticking with the paper carrying their brand, and for good reason. These companies put a lot of effort into developing their printing technology, and they know how to formulate papers that will give you good results. That's not to say that putting HP paper into an Epson printer will produce poor quality photos, but you'll generally get better looking images sticking with the Epson stock when using an Epson printer.

When shopping for paper, keep your eyes out for the words "professional," "pro," or "premium." A "premium gloss photo paper" is going to produce better results than a "glossy photo paper." Another way to figure out the quality of the paper is to look at the price. Twenty-five sheets of higher quality paper will cost more than the same quantity of less expensive stuff.

But don't limit yourself to high-end papers. Keep on hand packages of less expensive papers. While you'll want to print out your truly best shots on a professional-level paper, there's no reason to spend a fortune just to give someone a printout of a snapshot.

In any case, many photographers love the convenience of printing as many (or as few) copies of an image as they wish. Even if they also use other sharing tools, they'll still print the occasional image on their trusty inkjet.

Bottom line? You'll have more artistic control over the images that

come off your own printer. The trade-off is that you may need to tweak or adjust the images for optimal output, and you'll need to keep print supplies like ink and paper available. If you're looking for a way to output a large order of prints, send lots of individual orders to many different people, or create a photo book, photographic service providers are the way to go.

Figure 7.4. Using good-quality inkjet photo paper designed by the manufacturer to work best with your printer and ink will make it easier to produce high-quality prints. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Help Yourself

The one-hour photo stores were very slow in their transition to digital photography. You've probably noticed that there are a lot fewer of them around now. Stoic in the face of a changing market, many continued to offer film-only services while consumers snatched up digital cameras in record numbers. Needless to say, that didn't work well.

In an effort to remain in business many stores have installed photo-printing kiosks that allow the photographer to print images without the bother of dealing with salespeople. The stations often have a flatbed scanner as well, so you can also scan a print or negative you already have in order to make additional prints.

Pop in your media card, follow on-screen directions, and a few minutes later you get your prints. Some systems are even networked to Web sites, so you can upload your images at home and have prints waiting when you go out to do your errands. Will kiosks save the photo-processing business? It's hard to tell, but unlikely. Most consumers enjoy printing their own pictures, as well as the freedom to order online any photos they don't want to print themselves.

The quality in most kiosks is at least as good as you'd get from an online order, and frequently better than a low-end inkjet can produce. If you come across one, don't be afraid to use it. It costs just pennies to produce a sample print, and if the device is in a convenient location (like a pharmacy or grocery store you're going to *anyhow*) it doesn't hurt to kill two birds with one stone.

As an added bonus, with many of the kiosks, if you don't like the way your print comes out, simply tell the clerk and you'll get to make a second print for free. Can't do *that* on your inkjet.

Mailing It in

If you're less inclined to do your own printing, or looking for an easy way to send prints to friends and family, the all-in-one packages (and some Web sites, see below) provide excellent tools for turning digital images into high-quality glossy prints.

Think of your all-in-one program or photo-sharing Web site as the interface to a giant professional photo lab. Click on your photograph and then hit the "order prints" button in most programs and you're on your way to getting photos ordered, packaged, and mailed anywhere.

When you order prints, your files are transferred electronically (remember, sending a copy of a digital image doesn't reduce its quality) to a big processing center where they are printed on expensive, high-end machines. (This doesn't necessarily mean they'll be better than the output you can get on an inkjet, but it does mean that *you* don't have to print them.) They're then packaged and shipped to the address you provide.

The best thing about these services is that they offer more than just prints. Many programs and Web sites can walk you through the steps needed to create photographic books, hard-or soft-cover compilations of your photos laid out as if you'd hired a talented graphic designer to help you make a custom book. These volumes make great gifts, and they're much more interesting - than a pile of pictures.

TIP

OK, this one isn't a travel tip per se, but if you want to really make someone happy, create a custom book with photos from a special event. I've brought my camera to many a christening or bar mitzvah, and then ordered a hardcover book for the person I photographed. It's a much appreciated, thoughtful present. You can do this for travel subjects, too. Want to thank the tour guide who showed you around Guam for a week? Make a book.

Figure 7.5. BookMaker is a stand-alone application from MyPublisher.com that allows Windows users to create a book on their computer, then transmit the finished book to MyPublisher.com for printing. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)

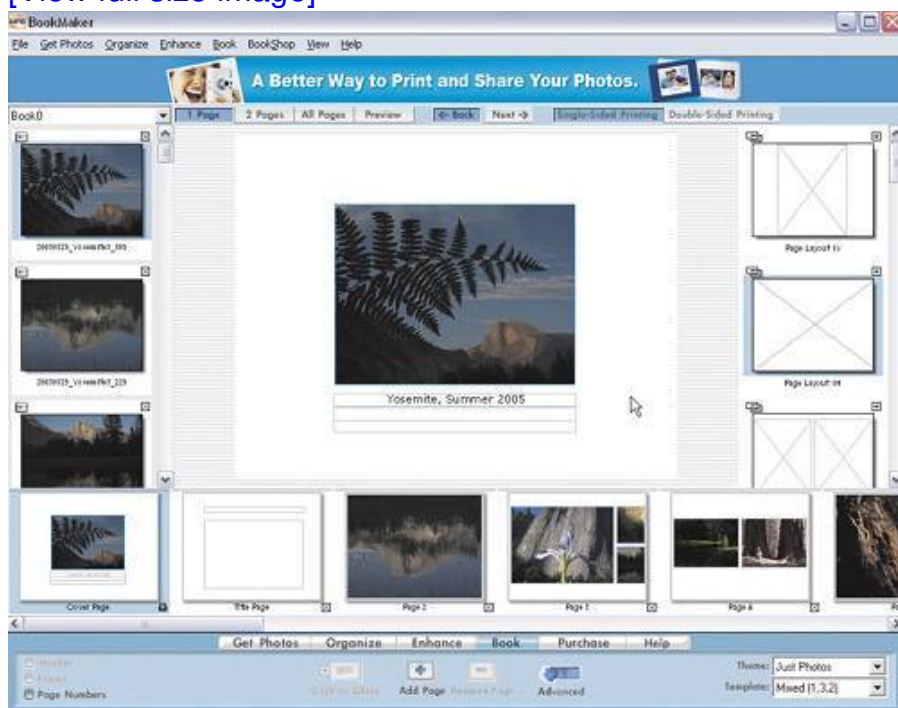
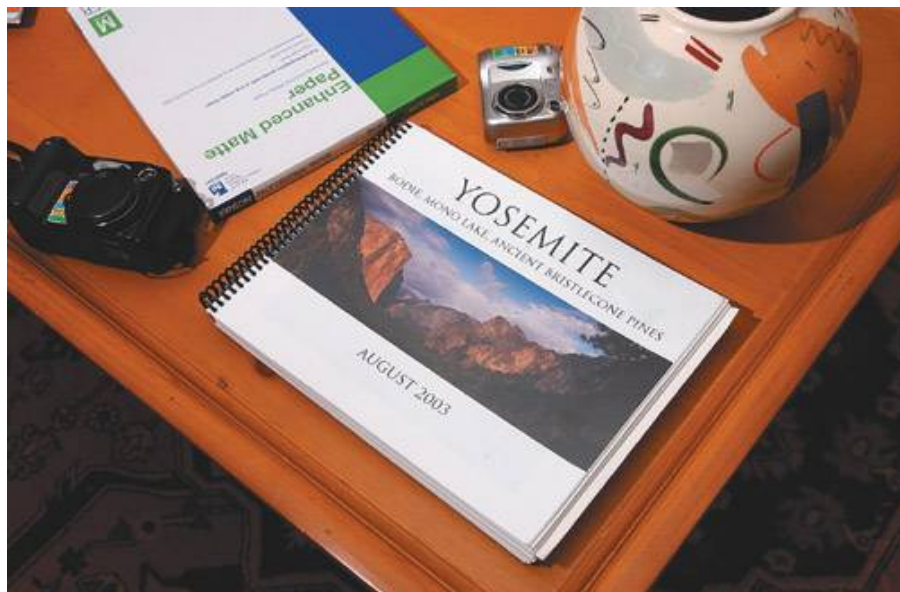


Figure 7.6. Self-publishing is easy. You can either print your own book and have it bound at a local office supply store, or use one of the many online services that will print a book for you using your photographs. (Photo by Michael Schwarz)



It's a snap to create a book. Most of the time you just need to select some photos or an album, click on the button to make a book, and then choose a template, and hit the "buy" button. It's really that simple. Most of the programs will also allow you to drag photos or pages around in the book, change the themes on certain pages, write captions, and more. It's a fun way to share your pictures.

Slipped Disc

It's often not necessary to print your photographs when you want to share them. If you'd like to hand someone your photographs, but don't want to spend time printing them, make a CD or DVD filled with your images. Again, this is a snap if you turn to your all-in-one photo program, but you can also do it on a Mac or a PC without any other programs.

TIP

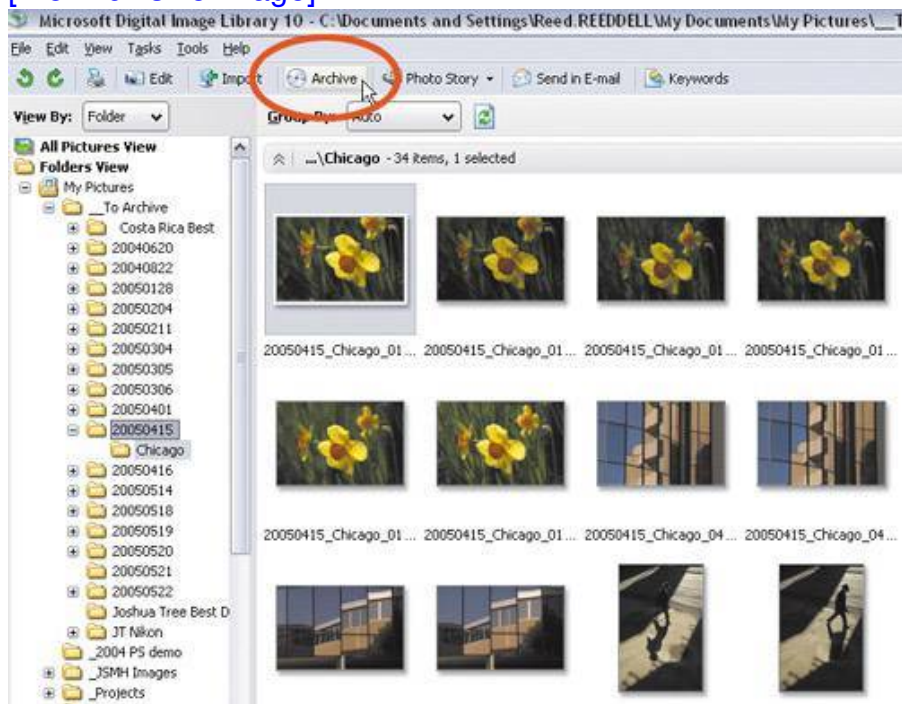
Collecting images for CD or DVD is something that the photo-editing programs do not do well, generally speaking, and it is easier to do with a consumer-level tool.

From your photo package, select a group of images or albums and look for a button that says "Share" or "Burn." This will allow you to collect all of your images (usually giving you the ability to resize them or rename them during this step) and then burn an optical disc with a collection of your photos.

Making a disc with your images on your Mac or PC couldn't be easier. On Mac OS X, insert a blank disc, give it a name when asked, and then drag your images onto its icon in the finder. Next to the icon of the disc in any Finder window you'll see a little icon that indicates you can burn the disc. Click that, and your disc will be made for you.

Figure 7.7. Microsoft Digital Image Library 10, part of MS Digital Image Suite 10, has an "Archive" button that will start the process of burning the selected material to CD or DVD, depending on your computer. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



The process is similar on the PC. On Windows XP, the system will see when you insert a blank disc and an autoplay window will pop up asking what you'd like to do with that disc. The easiest way to make your CD or DVD is to have it open a window for the disc and then copy your images into that window. Once they're all there, click the "Burn this CD" button on the left, and you're done.

TIP

If the autoplay doesn't pop up when you insert the disc, try right-clicking the folder of images you want to burn and choose the "Send to CD..." choice.

If you'd like to get fancier, you can take the same collection of images and create a slideshow, which you can burn onto a CD or a DVD for sharing with friends and family. Most programs will let you arrange your images, adjust the timing of the slideshows, add music, and even create special effects for the transitions between pictures. If your program doesn't have a button labeled "slideshow," the features are usually found under a Sharing menu.

Another nice way to share your photos with friends is to play your CD or DVD slideshow on your TV using your DVD player. It's more interesting to see photos on a big screen (especially if you happen to have an HDTV set) than it is to huddle around a computer monitor. Big couches, popcorn, and fantastic travel photographs make for a great evening. Most of the all-in-one programs will walk you through the steps of creating a slideshow that'll work in most DVD players.

TIP

Most consumer and prosumer digital cameras have a connector that allows you to hook them up to your television for camera-generated slideshows. These aren't nearly as sophisticated as the ones you can make with your computer, but they're a fun way to review your photos while you're still traveling, especially if you didn't bring your computer along.

Figure 7.8a. Some inkjet printers make it easy to create beautiful labels for your CDs and DVDs using inkjet-printable media. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Figure 7.8b. Many applications now let you create a slideshow with music that can be burned to a DVD and shown on a television using a DVD player. The label was printed using an inkjet printer directly on the DVD. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



Virtual Insanity

A photographic print is great, but there are times when you don't need to go through the effort of reproducing your photograph to share it with others. In many ways, the Internet has replaced the photographic print with the instantaneous transmission of photographs. This has opened up new opportunities for photographers to share their work in the blink of an eye, not only with friends and family, but also with people they've never met before.

Community Service

If you'd like to share your photographs with people around the world, one of the easiest ways is with an online photo service or a photo community. Think of a photo service (such as snapfish.com, shutterfly.com, and others) as an online photo-processing store. Such sites allow photographers to upload photos and then have other people log into the service and order prints of the images. This works great for things like weddings and special events where someone might want their own copy of your pictures, but you don't want to have to print and send them.

A photo community (like flickr.com, buzznet.com, smugmug.com, and friendster.com), on the other hand, is focused on the sharing of photos, more for artistic appreciation than for commercial output. On photo community Web sites there are all sorts of topic-based groups (travel, food, sports, and so on). People post their photographs as if they were journal entries or submissions in a contest, and other members comment on them.

These sites offer a variety of uploading tools for transferring images from your computer to the Web sites. Many of them even allow you to email your photos to post them, or send them from a camera phone. Registering for either photo service Web sites or photo community Web sites is easy, and most provide free hosting space for your photos.

The URL of Browser

You don't need to use a photo service or photo community site to post your photographs if you're familiar with creating and hosting a web page. (If you *are* familiar with making your own pages, you're probably not reading these instructions on how to do so.)

All-in-one programs, many browsers, and most photo-editing packages allow for the quick creation of web pages based on templates. Often called web galleries or just galleries, the tools for creating quick galleries are usually found under Export, Share, or Automate menus on your computer, and they can create complex web pages in a few fast clicks.

You'll need to be able to FTP the pages and folders to your web-hosting provider, who will need to give you information on the programs you can use and the steps you'll need to take. It's this added complexity that makes the photo Web sites so popular.

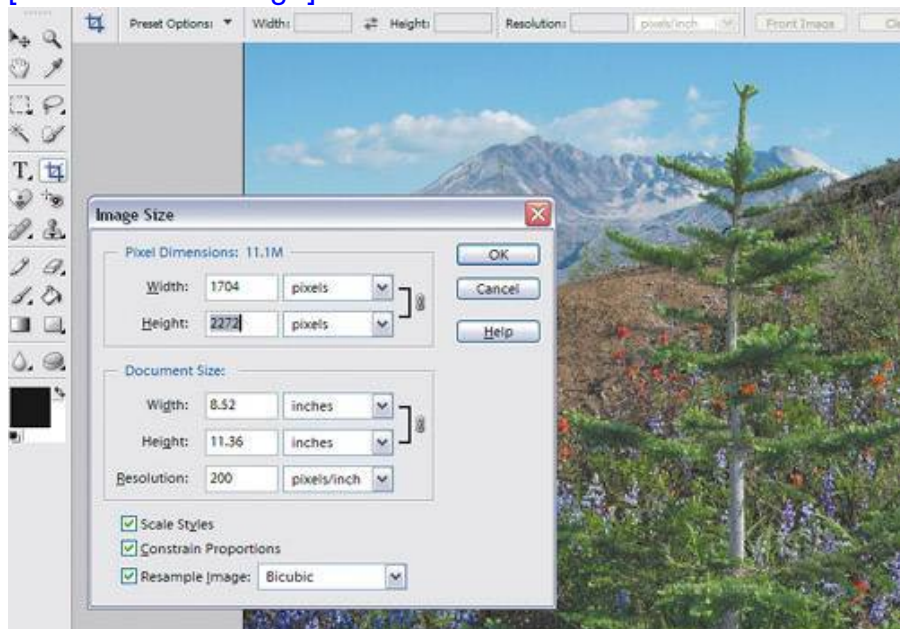
No Postage Required

Directly emailing your pictures is one of the easiest ways to share them. You can send photos as attachments just as easily as you can send a Word document or spreadsheet. You can also use most photo packages, browsers, and many editing programs to send copies of your images by using a Share or Export option.

Remember that a photo can be quite large, much larger than most email servers can handle. A five-megapixel camera might make a file that's larger than five megabytes, and that's a lot more than your recipient will need in order to view it on a monitor. Always resize your image to something less cumbersome, such as 640x480, before sending. And be sure to save it as a JPEG (.jpg) format file. That way it will be compressed to make the file size smaller, and, as long as you stay around medium compression, it will look great on the recipient's screen.

Figure 7.9. A five-megapixel digital camera will create an image file that opens to about 11 megabytes, much more than you would want to send via email. Be sure to downsize the image and compress it into a JPEG file before emailing it. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



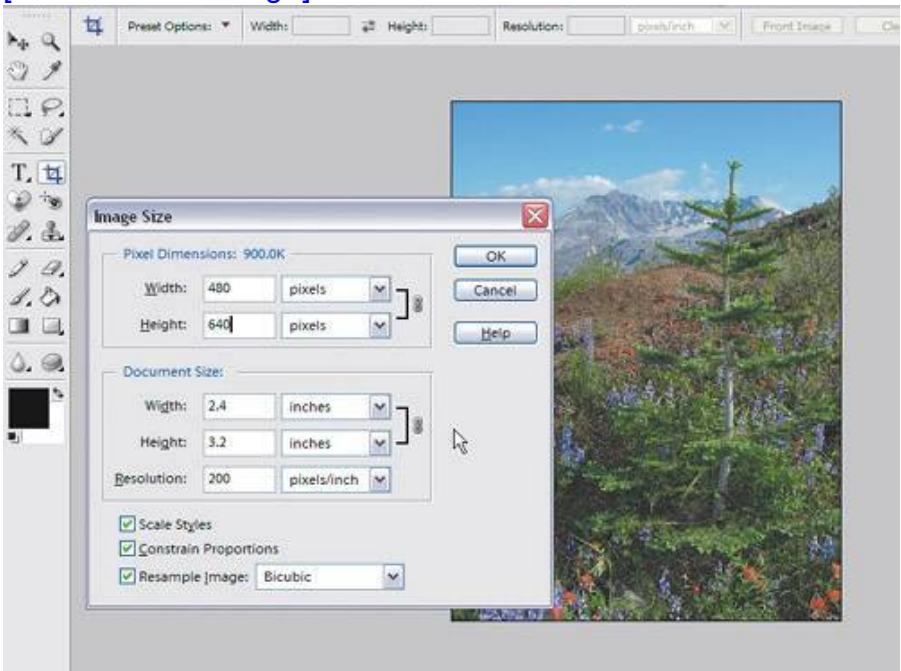
TIP

You'll also want to be sure you don't send your email to too many people for fear of having your Internet account suspended. Fifty pieces of mail, each with a five-megabyte attachment, is a surefire way to have your account questioned or terminated. That's another reason the photo-sharing sites are so popular; they shift the burden of sending the images to the Web site, instead of the

photographer's email.

Figure 7.10. Downsized to 640 pixels tall, this 11-megabyte photo is now just 900 kilobytes, and after being compressed will be less than 100K, making it easy to email. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)

[\[View full size image\]](#)



There's no need to choose a single way to share your images. After a trip it's entirely acceptable for a photographer to mix all the sharing techniques: Print several of the best shots to hang on the wall or put in a scrapbook; order a book or create a CD or DVD as a souvenir for a traveling companion; turn a great shot into a holiday card; upload some photos for friends to order; and post a few others to a photo

community. Mix and match as you wish. There are more tools available for sharing your digital photographs than ever before, so it's easy and fun to show them off to the world.

Figure 7.11. With today's tools it's easy to make sure that all your friends and family see the beautiful photos you've created. (Photo by Reed Hoffmann)



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